MERCHANTS FROM CATHAY

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

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MERCHANTS FROM CATHAY

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BY

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

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TO

MY WIFE

Braver than sea-going ships with the dawn in their sails,
Than the wind before dawn more healing and fragrant and free,
Fairer than sight of a city all white, from the mountain-top viewed in the vales,
Or the silver-bright flakes of the moonlight in lakes, when the moon rides the clouds and the forest awakes,
You are to me!

For you are to me what the bowstring is to the shaft,
Speeding my purpose aloft and aflame and afar.
Through the thick of the fight, in your eyes' steady light my soul hath seen splendor, and laughed.
Now, however I tend betwixt foeman and friend through the riddle of Life to Death's light at the end,
I ride for your star!

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MERCHANTS FROM CATHAY

THE AWAKENING OF THE TREES

First, when all the boughs, still heavy-laden, swished and rattled
In the smothered, sighing forest where the sleet and snowfall battled,
Where by day the crow croaked only
And by night the moon blinked wanly,
Even there the rumor traveled and the deep-bound root-elves tattled.
"Change evolving!" so they said.
"Riddles solving!" In the dead
And dungeoned deeps of earth we are questioning ourselves.
We are answering, 'Rebirth!'
We are forming, we are swarming, we are climbing!" said the elves.

And the larch unto the maple, and the chestnut to the beech
In their beck'ning, bowing language passed the secret each to each,
Passed the whispered, thrilling message
Till they thrilled again with presage
Of the wizard wonders pending and, in low, unending speech,
"Bonds are breaking!" said the trees.
"Something waking! Lo, a breeze
And a bird-chirp of last year. . . . Is it *that* that shall befall,
Or mere memory we hear?
We are trembling, we are wondering and waiting!" said they all.

And old Winter, who had brooded on the autumn groves denuded,
And, with dotard kindness shining, laid his cloak for their attire,
Felt a sudden stir of fire
Run and ripple o'er the land,
(Warming life or kindling fire?)
Which he did not understand;
But it irked the age-chilled sire
In a way he could not stand.
So he rose from long reclining
And he gathered up his raiment—
All his drifted white attire—
And he stopped not for repayment,
But he fled on winds loud whining, winging Northward in his ire.

Could it be? The sun came singing down the hills with breezy weather;
All the scents of April bringing, all the birds of April winging,
All the showers of April flinging—shower and shine and song together!
Could it be? Could it be?
How they babbled, tree to tree,
How they loosed their pent garrulity and rustled, tree to tree—
In what lively conversation, in what wordy jubilation
Did they babble, did they chatter, did they gossip, tree to tree!
'We must dress us, we must dress us! We are most unkempt and frowsy,
For we cared not in the winter—in the winter dull and drowsy!
But the birds, our little gallants,
On our branches twit and balance.
We must blossom forth in daintiness, no longer drab and drowsy!'
And daintily, oh daintily, from morning-time to twilight,

They prinked them in the sunlight, they blossomed in that shy light
With blossoms white and virginal, with blossoms pink and saucy,
With leafy fillets garlanded and streamers green and mossy.
With violets for their slipper-bows and sunlight for adorning
They blossomed forth, each one of them, to greet the April morning!
And the little sap-elves chuckled,
'Mid the bloom swayed to and fro,
" 'Tis a most ecstatic morning, but we knew it long ago—
We knew it all—we knew it all amany months ago!"

FALSORUM DEORUM CULTOR

Give me my mystery, nor let me be
Set in a world of rote and rule o' thumb.
My little eyes see all there is to see?
My scrap of brain know all there is to know?
My mumming lips are—dumb
Before the presences that form and flow
Through each day's mystery!

Then Fable, they malign you? 'Tis a day
Assured of this, that nothing is assured.
Come to me, Fable! Foot your satyr way!
Since all's so plain there's nothing plain to me,
Rather I would be cured
By purest essences of phantasy
As in the world's mad May!

Right bard, who spoke for "Triton's wreathèd horn"!
And this I speak for: Glaucus and his train,
Finned shapes and scaly, on this sea-blue morn
Seek with their soft Æolic prophecies
Lost islands of the main.
I follow Leucothea overseas
For the old myth reborn!

Oh rough-horned river gods, blue-mantled round,
Rise from your streams to-day that flow as flowed
Thrice-haunted streams 'neath Myrtion! At the sound,
Sweet Superstition, wake a little while—
As when the full spits lowed
Through awe-struck silence on Apollo's isle
And the Thrinakrian hides crept o'er the ground!

THE BIRD FANCIER

Overhead a bleak and sinful sky
Muttered with thunder; and thick and rolling
In from the bay the fog came billowing,
Blurring out outlines, yellowing
Pave and front, to deep vague bells tolling;
And still that shop drew the Stranger's eye!

Each sagging house, a crouched suspect, eyes him;
But the window he peers at, like a spectrum
Flashed full on one, or a sudden plectrum
Plucked across strong chords—how its panes enveigle!
Its smeared, bleared panes! Each dares—defies him;
For, within? 'Tis alive, to enchant and surprise him
With cockatoo, oriole, owl and eagle!

And more marvelous birds, all in gorgeous feather,
Snap eyes, stretch necks, ruffle wings and preen them
Giddy before him, on swings, in cages.
Days of the Sultans! Days of the Mages!
Who before in such array has seen them,
Or where before? How they ruffle and lurch
And swing and cock on each swaying perch
And peck and yawn golden beaks and stare,
Like viziers, like rajahs imprisoned there
Of their haughty lineage well aware!

He chills to the fog. He stamps and shuffles.
The sound strikes through, and each proud bird ruffles—
Startled, inquiring, perchance conspiring—
Each inky bead of an eye upon him,
Ready to flock to, attack or shun him.
He stamps again. At their backs a curtain
Of crimson moves. Does a gray face show
In just a glance of disturbance so?
A wizened face? Well—he is not certain!

Beyond all cause perturbed he stepped away.
Straight a last glimmer from the smothered day
Badged in raw gold that nameplate on the door.
Nearer he craned, forward he stepped, and more;
And knocked, even while his pulses said him nay.

A thing to remark at least, as that door swung slowly,
Silently inward. On such a view it gave!
Out of the street as out of a mouldering grave—
Into a chamber enchanted, bedizened wholly
With birds, birds, birds! From the ceiling they sang and swung.
Cages on cages, a clutter of cages hung
So crowded upon the walls they seemed wrought of wings,
Shimmering color, gilt wires, and crests and breasts
Of sleek iridescence—close-woofed of all fluttering things.

And his host before him; a vivid body
(Striped waistcoat, blue tail-coat, black skullcap!)
Surely spirited forth from some antique cuddy
Of Time's lumbered store-room; a quaint, brisk chap,
His tight black breeches bursting their stitches:
"Eh? Pray you be seated! I heard your rap.
Just in time for a ra-are bird, sir, you are;
A grass-green Surinam jacamar!"

Carmine, maroon, turquoise, orange, yellow:
Such variegation as rustled around him
Ached on his eyes, came to quite confound him!
He reeled to a chair. Curse that bent old fellow
With eyes so brilliant and strange he thought them
Topaz! A Mogul might have brought them
In his high-swung howdah from some Orient court;
Gouged them into that yellow old skull for sport!
And this cheeping, chattering, chirping, flustering
Of birds—here, there, all about him clustering! . . .
Then sudden some far throat swelled and sent
One golden carol forth, jubilant,
Swelling, welling,—gay, gay, gay.
Lackaday!
Full-orbed, it found him,—
Spun and wove till its sweet toils bound him!

Over a cage of brassy wires
The Fancier bent in a mothering way . . .
The Stranger stared in a golden daze.
Pulsed through that song's spun gauze a haze
Of faint, far strumming, of phantom lyres
From the dream-thralled courts of lost empires
Zoning, zoning,
In rumorous moaning,
His heart with strains of an ancient day.

"Song in sunset valleys!
Song in Cockagne!
We know
In Yvetot
Now no such songs reign.

"Our arbors in Yvetot,
Sere they are and brown,
Yet once what carols, carols,
Carols, carols, carols,
Carols, carols, carols
Sang the sun down!"

"So linnet sings and starling—
But phœnix—pheasant—we,
Peacocks and lyre-birds
From far over sea!
Guinea- and Malaccan-born,
Javan-plumed and dyed!
Oh the jungles, the jungles,
The tropic-fruited jungles,
The heavy-bowered jungles
Where we sing at eventide!"

"Now here's a flamingo" (he heard the Fancier)
"From Mesopotamia, complected clever!"
A scarlet neck coiled around in answer;
Two humorous bird eyes made him shiver.
They winked at him with no fear whatever,
And the wide bill split in an eerie—smile? . . .
A cold hand closed on the Stranger's liver.
He shook to a sense of impending guile!

Why, the shop was—queer; but—bosh! He was drowsy!
With a cough he straightened and stared at the ceiling.
A canary—chuckled? A bullfinch frowsy,
Like a coy girl over her muff, (revealing
What?) looked away. The room *had* changed feeling!
Something lurked and entrenched itself—here—yon—there;
In each cage, on each perch, sensed double-dealing;
A poise of mystery in the air!

And here once more the Fancier hobbled
With a green-glossed, goggling, glaring treasure.
It shook its crest, it strutted, gobbled,
Eyed the Stranger—aye, seemed to take his measure!
And—he felt a sudden and frightful seizure,
For out of the tail of his eye he saw
At the back of the shop emerge with leisure
Sudden-from-nowhere—a bird of Awe!

From the jacamar shuttled his gaze, rose owl-like
To this further wonder, as nearer came
The cassowary, approaching fowl-like.
But fowl-like he thought it only in name!
He felt his pulses shorten and thicken,
He felt his loud heart-beats press and quicken,
As it stalked him, like some colossal chicken—
A tufted chicken—yet not the same!

Then a screech-owl screeched from some cock-loft hidden,
A macaw flapped down at his ear to tweak,
And a gold-breasted trumpeter squawked unbidden
His battle-call through a gaping beak!
An ostrich loomed forth in his scaly gaiters,
Three jackdaws grinned from the wall like satyrs.
The Stranger's gaze flamed with suns and craters,
And a spoonbill's spatula chilled his cheek!

Then his eyesight cleared, and his host (as josses
Might smile on their slaves) rubbed his hands with glee:
"For I wished to remark that albatrosses
Go fast this season. We've left but three—"
"Not so fast! Not so fast!" cried the paling Stranger
As he leapt to his feet all alive to danger.
But the Fancier leered like a money-changer
And gripped him. "You'll buy one and you'll pay *me!*"

His topaz eyes glared. Did he fluff bedizened?
His long nose sharpened. He cocked his head.
Like awls those eyes bored their prey imprisoned,
To sunbursts they grew as the moment sped,

Till doubt no longer the fact dissembled:
On the Fancier's arms the feathers assembled!
The Stranger trembled and looked and trembled . . .
His fight to the door took a year of dread.

. . . . .

The sky hung grayer. Bleak rain was falling.
Fog eddied on through that shale-gray mews.
Weak stumbled the Stranger from thought appalling.
The cobbles stuttered beneath his shoes.
Down backstreets squalid and dark and narrow
His eyes swam color, he shook to the marrow!
He shied and ran from a hopping sparrow
Through a feathery storm of unholy hues!

LIGHTNING

Ere we be stricken blind to certain dreams,
Thank God there is a wild particular light
Flashes upon us from the relenting height
Of honest heaven! At such an hour, it seems,
We gazed on patterned fields and shrunken streams
From our warm mountain, with the infinite
Royal about us, as the fabled, bright
Gods of Olympus scanned their Attic demes.

And then—cloud-shadows chilled us, and the sun
Was gone. Yet at the moment of my pain
A vivid sheet of lightning showed you clear
Against the eclipse. Lost? Aye, but rapt from one
Who laughed for immortal rapture of you, dear,
Through following thunder and the driving rain!

THE HERITAGE FOREGONE

As a child's small height doth see
Towering presence in the tree
That a man's earth-dragging eyes
To no symbol may surprise,
Nature that radiant word of hers
Vouchsafes but to her worshippers.

They have become as little children. They
Have put away
The toils of life-defeaturing towns;
Perchance in one wild moment sought the downs,
The mountains, or the sea's assuaging rage
In sudden instinct for their heritage.

For it is instinct! As the wounded creature
Tracks down the root or herb that medicines,
So turns the wounded spirit unto Nature,
Draws doubtful, then reviving breath, and wins,
In that first instant, certainty and presence,
From sea and sky the pure, unanalyzed essence
Of infinite calm,
And healing balm
From a vast area of grateful hues,
Till the soul bursts its bonds, and flutters loose,
An unjessed falcon, for the higher tides
Of space, where peace, with vision, wing to wing abides.

Then do the strident streets of Man's devising
Fade, with their pestilent vapors, from the mind.
The winds of heaven, from heavenly coverts rising,
Cry of the golden quarry their flight shall find.
The immemorial sunset's bright unveiling
Blazons on burning clouds the benefice
Of ancient faith, of splendid dream, that is
To To-day's clashing creeds
Brave as the sun, pure as the moon, who leads
Her vestal stars with silvery vestures trailing.

Alone you shall hold converse, you shall be
Not for one instant without intelligence
Of grace and the dominion of a God.
What are the morning birds
But constant words?
Speech tremors through the trees and thrills the sod.
Dumb and supine, the very fields adjure
That here is purging, here the final cure.
The flowers have glorious secrets in their eyes.
Here walls immure us not. We knead the world
Between our palms, and look beyond our fate
With courage grown great,
With newly anointed sight and judgment wise.

In leaves' altercation,
In birds' jubilation,
In the pursuit of fluctuous streams that run
From shadow into sun,
The voice that murmured undecipherate things,
And yet of what a splendid rumor,
To our child ears, now looses luctual springs
Of hope, now stays us in a steadfast humor
Of happiness. We are in family
With all our speechless mates; find Wind a fabler
Of romance all more wondrous, being true.
The slightest breeze is abler
Unrealized adjacencies to endue
With brave complexions. From the cloud we catch
Olympian raiment. Each swirled leaf of chance
Trails its Atlantean significance.
Mornings and evenings match
In dressing heaven in fairer, sweeter guises;
And, as the unturned, ponderous rock hides its minute surprises,
We pry the hills up for their secrets, find
A scurrying population of new divinings;
And, in the brook's equivocate twists and twinings,
Startle a law—like prophecy from Man's laborious mind.

And some, in whom their fathers' daring blood
Runs like a tide at flood,
Shall choose the sea,
One of her elemental host to be,
To know her swoons of pleasance and her dolors,
Her calms, her storms, and all her changing colors,
Her griefs, that fling wraith-arms to the fitful stars,
The black, wet nights, all clamorous with her wars,
Her love-luxuriance and the sweep of her might,
All stress and all delight.

And some shall isle them on some mountain-top
Whence all the world doth drop
Below into strange-traced maps of little likelihood,
Like the designs worms gnaw in rotting wood;
And all between and all below, cloud masses
Are at great wrestlings, and the deep crevasses
Resound with winds as do the coves with waves.
They too will be silent as the men of the sea,
Content to be,
Not querulous, not garrulous, like life's slaves.
For both the tremendous suctions of Eternity
Silence the grief that whines—the greed that raves.

And some shall choose the forest. Its ephors,
The trees, will usher them through giant doors,
Cathedral vistas; and from the glare of day
To high noon of solemnity, their tread
Shall pass across the plant-world's earliest dead
That waxed in primal ooze, and feed this hour,
Æon 'neath æon. They shall go their way
Through venerable aisles
Blue with the first morn's stillness for miles on unglimpsed miles,
Still with that utter calm succeeds a shock of power.

And some shall find their tillage lowland tracts among,
Complete of shine and song,
And live a day-dream, bound by intimate ties
To quietudes more stalwart hearts despise,
Minstreled by sweet concords of bird and breeze and flower
Hour by golden hour.

So, when one morning at our toil we say,
"He has been long away.
He comes from his high haunt to mix with us to-day,
To walk again
The busy, tyrannizing streets of men."
We shall indeed clasp hand
With an inaliened stranger to our land,
And little understand
The large and simple things about him. Nay,
His heart shall hold a secret we can never know.
Only, when once again he turns to go,
And we to life's so brief and baffled span,
A sudden light our dullard eyes may fan.
We may look back to where he smiled and trod,
And—inasmuch as he has grown a god—
Cry, "He is changed indeed. Why, he has grown a man!"

CHARMS

I hold to a cup my mother gave me
Of tears, bright tears, glad tears to save me,
Shed at my birth and ofttimes after—
Tears of pain and tears of laughter.
I lift against the shadowing years
The brilliance of her cup of tears.

And round my neck I wear forever
A chain no mortal hand may sever.
The links are pride, with honor's clasping,
That mocks each tempter's evil grasping,
Against all fear enheartening me,
My father's bright integrity.

Last is this scroll my true-love proffered
When all the love her deep heart offered
Was sealed therein, its seal commanding
All truth, all trust, all understanding.
Bound fast forever on my brows
Is this phylactery of our vows!

THE LOST GODS ABIDING

The old gods, the bright and glorious gods of a world at dawn,
Flushed with laughter and love, in marble symmetry throned on strength and pride,
Beneath the spell of the Lord of beautiful Life they still abide.
They are not gone.

They bowed their heads on their breasts, and became the hills,
Learning that sit at the knees of those marvelous mentors the skies.
Now they have learned. They are wise.
To nobler tasks they have set their stubborn wills.

Old gods, by eternal enchantment not passed
But imprisoned, that the ancient beauty might last,
Once, from starry heights higher than Olympus, a Voice stilled your wrangles and storms.
Silence fell on your forms
In the height of the power of your riotous reign, that ye learn
Of loam, grass-blade, and lichen and fern
The true stature of godhood—the charity, silence, and peace.
Do they cry your release,
Idle egoists, cognizant not of how infinite far
Ye are more than ye were?

Ye liege lords of the Being whose gentleness raised you to him,
Afar on the dim
Sunset-cinctured horizon ye sit, with new carcenets of stars,
Shaming Man from his dull, daily spoilings and wars,
From his impotent belying desires, as, through twilight's hushed dream,
Drinking deep of the twilight that stills and absolves. doth he come
From weary, soul-rending, grim laboring tiredly home,
To your kindly tribunal come home!

Philosophers grown so grave, understanding, and kind;
Inspired, not resigned;
With exception alone of some shaggy-wild, boisterous, and bluff
Young Bacchus in rough,
Who, unharnessed as yet of restraint,
Shakes erupting his wrath and his might
On the flame-terrored night,
Subsiding only in grumbling ire
And gurgling fire
At the gentle protest of the wise moon, his saint,—
How your bosoms have suckled strong wills!
How true heroes have sprung from you, hills!
And from far at the last, from what far wastes of forest or foam
Ye have drawn them home,
That once, if for only once more
They might shout on your summits and stride with your clouds for a floor,
Reel back at the thunder and grapple in fierce love and wild
Your strength to their breasts, as a Titan were grasped by its child,
Yea, for only once more
That their hearts might be fired by your sunsets, that in shame they might kneel and adore,

That the gyves of the world might fall from them and dominant, free,
They might stride with your lightnings and chant with your thunders and
plunge through your snows as a sea!

Oh majestic gods immured,
That ask not nor speak, but are still
And in silence fulfill
All the ministries taught you by God;
Are filled with his vastness, fulfilling in it the soul-dream of each single
earth-sod,
The hour of the flower and the life of the grass and the growth of the gourd;
One day they shall come, oh ye mountains;
One day your rich guerdon falls due!
They shall flee unto you,
Man, woman and child, from their self-decreed doom,
From self-woven destructiveness, crying on Science no more,
With their reeling minds stilled as a tomb,
To your door—to your door,
To be purged, to be bosomed, to bathe in your high air's peace-fountain.
Was not Sinai a mountain?
They shall come bearing weaknesses, ailments, and griefs and unrests
To be clasped to your breasts,—
And the Lord, from his watch-tower above,
Cry "The old gods no more! Not a dream of them left for grief-trove!
But behold, oh behold, in their majesty, power and peace,
The new gods, the great, strong, merciful gods of release—
True gods of my mercy and love!"

The old gods, the bright and beautiful gods of the ages fled,
Flushed with laughter and love, through godlike agony dowered with pride
and pain,
In the far-throned mountains and hills of our world their glories forever
remain.
They are not dead!

THE ANVIL OF SOULS

High o'er the frowning forest, from the red door of the smithy
  Loomed forth the stern artificer of all the years to be.
"Now on the steeps of vision, what wanderer thou, I prithee?"
"I climb from Man to find the plan!" "Then learn of me!"

His sledge is oak and mountain-crag. Its weight is thunder.
  The souls are on his anvil laid as sword-blades bright.
His sledge's swing is lightning and cataclysmic wonder,
  Its impact on the leaping soul both Morn and Night!

And this is the song that he hath for mighty singing,
  "The blade that writhes beneath the sledge, white-hot—cold-blue!
The anvil—the anvil—the anvil's giant ringing;
  And, hissing from its bath of stars, the soul steeled true!"

The smithy's walls are lightened as by a forest fire,
  And first the smith was imaged wrath, and then vast peace!
His lineaments are joy and peace. His thews can never tire.
  The starry bath beside his hand is called Release.

The souls are hot with flashing sparks. The souls have voices;
  But drowned in the reverberance of that huge din.
And in his strength the smith is glad, and in his calm rejoices,
  And flings the trued steel to Release, to hiss therein.

His face glows joy. His face is ever lightened
  Not cruelly, but radiant with the justice of his trade;
For lo, the dullest metal to beauty brightened,
  The bent and dinted, flawed and scarred, like blue steel made!

"For Man I toil—for men have no regretting.
  So toil I, joying to be just to each for all.
As due them all, I true them all, no flaw forgetting;
  And in a like perfection they hang upon my wall.

"For Man is mine, but men are not my doing.
  So some shall writhe through furnaced pain to dazzle whole.
Not smith of dispensation I, but smith of trueing.
    Hark! From the well-brink of Release chants soul on soul!"

"And what is called your anvil? You name names madly!"
  "The state men flee and cling and flee—and would retest!
For all the glory of mine anvil, Heaven sings sadly.
  The soul of all perfection knows mine anvil best!"

. . . . . .

I keep within my heart this song of his for singing:
  "The steel that writhes beneath the sledge, white-hot—cold-blue!
The anvil—the anvil—the anvil's mighty ringing—
  And, hissing from its bath of stars, the soul steeled true!"

THE ARGO'S CHANTY

Orpheus hath harped her,
Her prow hath drunk the sea.
Fifty haughty heroes at her golden rowlocks be!
His fingers sweep the singing strings,
Her forefoot white before she flings,
Out from the shore she strains—she swings—
And lifts, oh, gallantly!

Orpheus shall harp for her,
The Talking Head speak wise for her,
Lynceus gaze sharp for her
And Tiphys search the skies for her!
May Colchis curse the dawn o' day when first she thundered free
And our golden captain, Jason, in glory put to sea!

Lovely Atalanta
The buskined huntress maid;
The lad who stretched Procrustes on the racking bed he laid;
And Hercules, whose infant thew
The hissing snakes of Hera slew;
And Nestor, strong to dare and do,
Bring home each dripping blade!

Castor, aye, and Pollux
Who boxed Bebrycia's king,—
Warriors, seers and mages at the rowlocks reach and swing;
But, heirs to winds uproarious,
The Twain, sons of Boreas,
With furled wings white and glorious,
Most magic are to sing!

Lemnos lies behind us
And ladies of good grace.
Home, bring home the oars again and lift the coasts o' Thrace!
Nor yet the Clashing Islands find,
Nor stark Promethean highlands find,
But here, of far or nigh lands, find
Adventure's very place—
Adventure's splendid, terrible and dear and dafting face!

Then, Orpheus, strike harp for us!
Oh, Talking Head, speak true for us!
Lynceus, look you sharp for us!
And, Tiphys, steer her through for us!
May Colchis curse the dawn o' day when first she thundered free
And our golden captain, Jason, in glory put to sea!

THE BOAST OF THE TIDES

Brief is the power ye assume,
  Motes on a mote world aswing!
Heaving through darkness and spume,
Deeply intoning your doom,
  Hark what we sing!

Sweeping all ages we spread,
  Tolling our dirge through the years,
Morning to nightfall our tread
Sounds o'er the graves of your dead,
  Sure as your tears.

Haled by the moon from afar,
  Whelm we the homes where ye hide;
Lords where the green fathoms are,
Lords of the reef and the bar—
  Lords the world wide.

Swelling to thunderous surge,
  Dandle we lightly your ships;
Crooning monotonous dirge,
Weltering deeply to purge
  Man from our lips.

Yet, fettered fast to our law,
  Blindly we chafe on a chain,
Surge 'neath a scourge, and withdraw,
Shamed, when the orb of white awe
  Gyves us again.

Ever and ever—but, hark!
  O'er the far rim of the sea,
When the last storm-stricken bark
Foams to its fate down the dark,
  We shall be free!

Sun-high in mutinous grace,
  Then shall our wild crests be curled,
And the vast roar of our race
Boom, hissing greenly, through space,
  Wide of the world.

The wreck of the moon for our might!
  Far shall we thunder and fall,
Pouring in splendors of light
Down the steep gulfs of the night—
  Lords over all!

THE YOUNG BROTHER

The tonsures halted. They knelt to pray
To the rain-stained Virgin beside the way.
Humbly each monk's bald head bent down.
Each fumbled his beads in his rusty gown,
A partridge covey in sober brown!

Young Patrick looked through his fingers spread
And glimpsed at the blue sky overhead.
He spied at the corn-shocks' yellow wealth,
And the keen day cried to his bounding health.
And then if he prayed—he prayed by stealth.

"Lord Christ, and Peter who keeps the keys,
Save now my soul from holy disease!
Curb the lusts of my flesh, but keep
My full pulse throbbing, awake or asleep,
With merry wonder that will not weep!

"Keep my lungs to drink deep the air,
And mine eyes to delight in these colors rare,
And my muscles satin-smooth, to thrill
To a buoyant heart on a windy hill,
And my prayers like sunset, splendid and still!

"Lord Christ, who strode lithely on land or sea
With meekness and mettle through Galilee,
Glad for the rain and the wind and the sun,
For the songs of birds and bright day begun,
Sanction the prayer of Thy youngest one!

"The birds of the air and the fish of the sea
And the winds of heaven were glad of Thee,
And Thou wert thewed as a stalwart friend,
Enduring strong to the merciful end.
Lord, bring me so to my merciful end!

"In joy, in joy of the open way,
Hearty in speech and the prayers I pray,
Open of countenance day and night,
Not the parchment husk of an anchorite,
But glad in this country's warmth and light!"

The tonsures rose and the old monks passed,
And the rapt and the prayerful, but one rose last
As a boy in beauty, a hart in chase,
An athlete girded to run a race,
With the sunlight full on his eager face.

Long lagged the road till the cloisters rose
Slumbering white in their peaceful close.
The humble of heart may God defend,
But the boy came singing with Christ for friend!
Christ, bring us all to a merciful end!

BROADWAY

The bed of the River is adamant and marl.
Deep and wide runs the River under cliffs of granite gray.
Under heights of ringing steel, with its woe and its weal,
'Twixt high beetling steeps the dark River sweeps
With its sounding, resounding chaunt of joy and sorrow,
With its dirges and its ditties of blessings and of pities,
Its medleyed many Yesterdays, its chaunt of one To-morrow,
Its song of To-morrow and To-day!

It courses through a channel that Titans must have hewn,
Its banks enormous ramparts dark and high, high and drear,
Yet sunlight strikes between them, and the boon white moon
Spills them molten silver night on night for year on year.
And piercing those ramparts are hordes on hordes of eyes
Glinting or dulling, staring bright and wise
On the faces of that River raised in joy and sorrow,
White for the yesterdays, bright for one To-morrow,
The phantom flood of faces raised to laugh or pray
From the River, the River of To-morrow and To-day,
With its burthen of the secrets of a People's joy and sorrow,
Its song of To-morrow and To-day!

Rains fall dark on that River. Snows drift white on that River;
And sunlight showers gold through all its mists and glooms forever;
And laughter aye shall ring from it, and high songs sing from it
Above the sobs and sighing, above the cursing crying
Of the multitude of voices that flood it like the faces
Upturned, upturned to the distant smoke-dimmed spaces
Of blue, of clouds and stars, in their quiet lost forever
To the swarming, surging multitude that make that mighty River
Of To-morrow and To-day
That floods upon its way
'Twixt its ramparts pierced with eyes, gleaming wise, dulling gray,—
On the deep dark flood of that straining, surging River
With its song of To-morrow and To-day!

Fabrics raised above that River, framed and girdered iron ways,
Stream with roaring traffic, coursed by steeds of steel.
Tubes beneath that River, tunnelled to amaze,
Din with dartled lightnings; and clamors clang and peal,—
Booming bells, and rippling chimes, and shouts of hurried trade,—
Wares cried along that River, *and bitter bargains made!*
And here a bower, there a bloom-festooned and white arcade,
Stems its fringing eddies (Oh, sickly flowers that fade!),
Draws its loitering eddies to grottoes hectic-gay
As mid-stream the turbid River still roars upon its way,
Chaunting still its joys and sorrows, its pasts and its to-morrows,
Its song of To-morrow and To-day!

What then is the song of that strange and sombre River?—
That solemn, sombre River, with reaches strangely gay,
With its sin-dark stains, and its undertone forever
Of little rippled laughters, like sun-streaks through the gray?
A song so old that its import fails and falters!
Life!—to the faces on its flood that battle by,

To the yearning eyes of youth, bowed heads in grisly halters,
To the mother clinging white to her little household altars,
To the mirthless smiles of lips wrung dry.

"Our life is this River of Haste," the murmur thickens.
"That thrills and overpowers, that sickens as it quickens,—
Once drawn down its stream to be one to-day, forever,
With the glamour and the dolor and the wisdom of the River,
With the strange increasing changes and the chances of the River,
With the stern warrior soul and the wild surpassing laughter
Of this torrent of the multitude, whose like comes never after;
To strive and sink and drown with a People's joy and sorrow
For the medleyed, tangled Past, for the groped-for one To-morrow;
An Age's everlasting, immortal, fearful River
That rolls and roars forever,
Forever and a day,
Till the soul of Man be risen and his raiment rent away!

THE YEARS TO BE

I cried to them in the twilight, in the shadowy places.
They are robed in a blinding light, but I have not seen their faces.
Their music is loud and sweet
To the beat of their glancing feet.
They are light through a prism glancing, in the dance of their moods and graces.

I cried to them from the summit where the wind was laughter.
I saw them against the sunset, ere they fled to the days hereafter.
Their music is sweet and long
Like a thin-drawn note of song.
I followed them with my soul, but my feet might not follow after.

I cried to them at the morn, when my pulses beat to a tabor.
I cried to them in the noon, in the heat and sweat of my labor.
In my cheerless night I cried
With my dead that lay beside,
When my voice was the hiss of a sword, and my grief as the bite of a sabre.

But they will not stop to speak nor to whisper of times or places.
They mock before—still before—when the eager thought out-races.
And ever the throb of cheers
Faint-blown through a mist of tears!
They are robed now in light, now in night—but I have not seen their faces!

THE MARVELOUS MUNCHAUSEN

The snug little room with its brazier fire aglow,
And Piet and Sachs and Vroom, all in the long ago,—
Oh, the very long ago! o'er their pipes and Hollands seen;
And on the wall the man-o'-war, and firelight on the screen!

Their flowered, bulging waistcoats that wrinkle when they chuckle;
The Baron much-mustachio'd, and gay with star and buckle
And bristling in a uniform as scarlet as his cheeks,
With choker lace beneath his chin, and splendid, yellow breeks!

The smoke drifts blue, and bluer through that window, all abreeze,
Are glinting sky and glistening sea beyond the Holland quays.
Blue tiles, red bricks, the bustling wharves where colors oriflamme;
Starched caps and rosy-posy cheeks—the girls of Amsterdam!

The snug little room with its brazier fire aglow!
Oh, listen, will he tell them as he told them long ago,—
Oh, very long ago, alaughing in his sleeve!
The marvelous Munchausen, with the fables *I* believe?

. . . . . .

When I had sown the Turkey-beans that reachèd to the moon,
And lifted all Westminster in the sling from my balloon,
(Swung over the Atlantic,
They peered from windows—frantic!)
When, eagle-back, I'd scanned the Pole in broad, eternal noon,

In Queen Mab's chariot I ventured on the sea.
'Twas like a mammoth hazelnut, with matchless orrery
Asparkle on its ceiling,
With planet-systems wheeling
And giddy comets sizzling all about the head o' me!

The nine bulls drew it, as stout as those of Crete,
And all were shod with horrid skulls that clattered on their feet.
Rich banners waved behind 'em,
While on their heads, to mind 'em,
Postilion crickets chirruped them, all chirping loud and sweet.

Ghost of the Cape I warn you of, for he is bottle-blue!
We split his Table Mountain. He gibbered and he flew.
The bulls straight showed disfeature
With gazing on the creature,
Stampeding in their harness when I gave the view-halloo.

Though wrecked on Egypt's obelisks, disaster I defied,
And harnessed Sphinx, the Emperor's gift, to tow an ark as wide
As great Westminster;
With beau and belle and spinster
And cleric, clerk, and coronet all tête-à-tête inside.

"Good folk, we sail for Africa!" said I to all my train.
When bold Munchausen leads you forth, what laggard dares remain
In slippered ease, uncaring
To share my deeds of daring?"
Their cheers amazed my modesty and more had made me vain!

"The Sultan's bees I've shepherded. I've hornpiped at Marseilles
Where gulped me down (well-nigh to drown!) the liveliest of whales.
I'm riskiest of riskers,
But, blow my grizzled whiskers,"
I cried, "May jackals gnaw my bones, if now Munchausen fails!"

By night the lions roared at us. By day the simoons came
And swept across our caravan in sandy clouds of flame;
But naught dismayed our temper, or
The genial Afric Emperor
Had missed my handsome greeting, to his long-abiding shame.

The people of the Mountains of the Moon I wined and dined.
I reigned at Gristariska when His Majesty declined.
Reforms I wrought untiring,
With Gog and Magog squiring,
And Frosticos, my bosom-friend, who lent a legal mind.

For last superb achievement (Bright tears may Envy shed!)
I built a bridge, from Africa to distant England spread.
No edifice of fable,
Nay, not the Tower of Babel,
Surpassed its mammoth glory in the heavens overhead!

So back across its noble arch my retinue and I
Advanced with blaring trumpets through the regions of the sky.
Clouds lingered to enwreath us,
Earth's kingdoms far beneath us,
And martial music cheered our march from all the birds that fly.

. . . . . .

The snug little room with its brazier fire aglow,
And Piet and Sachs and Vroom all sleeping long ago,
Oh so very long ago! And, chuckling in his sleeve,
Still, o'er the slumbering table,
Drone-droning on his fable,
The marvelous Munchausen, with the stories *I* believe!

THE DROWNED HIDALGO DREAMS

"Bahama and the Caribbees? But in the mains of sun
Oh, Cabot never won a realm like that our Cortez won!
Velasquez had his Cuba—Cordova, Yucatan,—
But Don Grijalva spied for us the conquest we began.
From Seville and from Cadiz beat out the fleets of chance
And fade through golden sunsets to climes of high romance;
And, like a cloud of fire, on phosphor tropic seas,
All day abeam the wondrous dream—all night its valiantries!

"We raised dusk Indian islands where painted parrots scream.
Our chief paced Cuba's beaches to frame the further dream,
Till out from drowsed Havana our brave sails drew unfurled,
Our red cross 'twixt its vivid flames daring the Western world.
Past Cozumel, Tobasco, and past Grijalva's isle,
Till on that Holy Thursday we saw our harbor smile,
And natives with their trinkets speed the long, light pirogue
From where the muddy island streams in languor disembogue.

"The royal Castile ensign apeak whipped out like flame;
And soft-voiced Indian women with fruits and flowers came.
Oh kindliest Marina, who held our captain's hand
And told in words of music the glory of that land!
Still do I dream volcanoes against an azure sky,—
Of swarth caciques and Aztecs that smiled and passed us by
In coats of priceless feather-work, like birds of Paradise,—
And, reeking to the hot, hot sun, the heathen sacrifice.

"Still gorgeous tropic plumage and fruits of fair design
Down streets of bright Tezcuco in savage brilliance shine.
Again from some high table-land I gasp upon the view
Of golden-domed Manoa that we hidalgos knew . . .
Again I hear the idols crash from their templed state.
The streets run thirsty murder and ring with screams of hate.
Again we swarm the altar rock and slay like raging beasts.
Again I hear through storms of spears the death-chant of the priests!

"Here there is time for thinking, where timeless tide-years flow.
And through my brain in pageants rolls the siege of Mexico.
But to my trance of dreaming no peace my dreaming brings,
For still the past shrieks round me with abominable things.
Heap high the treasures of all worlds, ye could not lure again
To such another conquest this man of Cortez' men!
Dead men, who saw the altars drip, the throbbing heart held high,
I cry 'Abominations!' Then charge me if I lie!

"Yet—Cuba and the Caribbees! Ah, but the mains of sun
Hold no transcending city like that our Cortez won!
Velasquez to his vanity, Cordova to his greed,
But Don Grijalva spied for us where our great chief might lead.
From Seville and from Cadiz beat out the fleets of chance
And fade through gorgeous sunsets to climes of high romance;
And, like a cloud of fire, through phosphor tropic seas,
All day abeam the wondrous dream—all night its valiantries!"

WHEN GOD WEARIED

In a south breeze that swept the hill
One night, when all the stars hung still
And twinkling in the lustrous void,
I stood, and dreamed this world destroyed,
That the vast heavens bent to scan
A blank world, innocent of Man.

Chaotic effort, vain pretence
Melted before the innocence
Of an Earth uninhabited
Even by the pale and solemn dead.
It was as if no life had been,
And no first shame and no first sin.

The shrieks of creeds, the groans of wars
Were dumb, beneath the steady stars;
No Man-made discords, song or weeping,—
Not even the thought of thousands sleeping
To waken, piteous or gay,
To the prompt, unrelenting Day.

Only the things of little brain,
Of natural joy and natural pain;
Beasts and birds, like as trees and flowers
Dreamed through that hush that numbed their powers.

And, while no sound came, far or near,
I felt God's weariness ensphere
The universe. His breath respired
Faintly, more faint. God, even, tired
Of his long joy and his long pain,—
This World. He slept to dream again!

And the south breeze breathed on and on
Of no more hope, of no more dawn,
Of no more effort, naught to plan,
With all the world erased of Man.

But I remained; a being, no less,
With the world's weight of consciousness;
First, in an ecstasy of release,
Feeling my heart expand with peace
Such as no man on earth has known,
And then,—intolerably alone.

So, on my eyes all Earth's delight
Flashed like a pageant blinding-bright,
Illumined by my utter fear,
Till even the most minute grew clear;
Mountains in sunlight, storm and snow;
Green forest lands, green fields below;
Cataract rivers, heaving seas
Of dazzling sapphire; writhen trees,
Billows of flowers and flights of birds;
Beasts of the jungle, flocks and herds

Familiar; all the clouds that blow
Gorgeous with color across the glow
Where the sunrise and sunset meet;
Forked golden lightnings, pearly sleet,
Tremendous thunder-bursts; all, all
That turns this life so magical!
Before my eyes they mingled, most
Like the wild banners of an host
In utter rout, wave on rich wave
Withdrawing to the Brain that gave.

And then the cities marching came,
Their walls arock, their roofs aflame;
Bridges and ships, a splendid spoil;
All the inventions of Man's toil
Surged in great epic pictures past,
Uprushed in smoke, and sought the vast.

Thus I knew beauty, and the worth
Of every bitter task on earth.
Thus I knew awe naught else could give,—
And one supreme desire,—to live!

All things flashed pristine on my view;
The dreams even God could not undo,
The splendors no high Heaven could dull,
The World even God could not annul!

"Aye, weary of your plan!" I cried,
"But this was wrought, and shall abide.
Our agony makes consecrate
A World you may not uncreate!
You gave us Beauty past all thought,—
But we have travailed, we have wrought
In blood and tears to build it new!
And marred it? But can You undo
Your thought, for that? How heavily
We labor toward eternity
With clumsy visions, acts how mean!
Yet—'tis too late to shift the scene,
Or Space's myriad stars would dart
Their spears, and pierce You to the heart!"

I spoke in anger terror-born;
And dreamed, and woke, and it was morn.
The real world bound me round again,
Cherished and close, and loud with men,
Labor and laughter, grief and love.
The cheerful sun shone out above.
Like a blue wall above me, high
Towered the comfortable sky!

MERCHANTS FROM CATHAY

How that They came.

Their heels slapped their bumping mules; their fat chaps glowed.
Glory unto Mary, each seemed to wear a crown!
Like sunset their robes were on the wide, white road:
So we saw those mad merchants come dusting into town!

Of their Beasts,

Two paunchy beasts they rode on and two they drove before.
May the Saints all help us, the tiger-stripes they had!
And the panniers upon them swelled full of stuffs and ore!
The square buzzed and jostled at a sight so mad.

And their Boast,

They bawled in their beards, and their turbans they wried.
They stopped by the stalls with curvetting and clatter.
As bronze as the bracken their necks and faces dyed—
And a stave they sat singing, to tell us of the matter.

With its Burthen

"For your silks, to Sugarmago! For your dyes, to Isfahan!
Weird fruits from the Isle o' Lamaree!
But for magic merchandise,
For treasure-trove and spice,
Here's a catch and a carol to the great, grand Chan,
The King of all the Kings across the sea!

And Chorus.

"Here's a catch and a carol to the great, grand Chan;
For we won through the deserts to his sunset barbican;
And the mountains of his palace no Titan's reach may span
Where he wields his seignorie!

A first Stave Fearsome,

"Red-as-blood skins of Panthers, so bright against the sun
On the walls of the halls where his pillared state is set
They daze with a blaze no man may look upon!
And with conduits of beverage those floors run wet!

And a second Right hard To stomach

"His wives stiff with riches, they sit before him there.
Bird and beast at his feast make song and clapping cheer.
And jugglers and enchanters, all walking on the air,
Make fall eclipse and thunder—make moons and suns appear!

And a third, Which is a Laughable Thing.

"Once the Chan, by his enemies sore-prest, and sorely spent,
Lay, so they say, in a thicket 'neath a tree
Where the howl of an owl vexed his foes from their intent:
Then that fowl for a holy bird of reverence made he!

Of the Chan's Hunting.

"And when he will a-hunting go, four elephants of white
Draw his wheeling daïs of lignum aloes made;
And marquises and admirals and barons of delight
All courier his chariot, in orfrayes arrayed!

We gape to Hear them end,

"A catch and a carol to the great, grand Chan!
Pastmasters of disasters, our desert caravan
Won through all peril to his sunset barbican,
Where he wields his seignorie!
And crowns he gave us! We end where we began:
A catch and a carol to the great, grand Chan,
The King of all the Kings across the sea!"

And are in Terror,

Those mad, antic Merchants! . . . Their stripèd beasts did beat
The market-square suddenly with hooves of beaten gold!
The ground yawned gaping and flamed beneath our feet!
They plunged to Pits Abysmal with their wealth untold!

And dread it is Devil's Work!

And some say the Chan himself in anger dealt the stroke—
For sharing of his secrets with silly, common folk:
But Holy, Blessèd Mary, preserve us as you may
Lest once more those mad Merchants come chanting from Cathay!

THE HEART'S COLLOQUY

Love said to Worship, "How saw you our lady,
At our meeting yester-evening, that home you came so slow?"
Worship raised his eyes, and rapt and yearning said he,
"Hey, my heart is heavy with the loss that I know!
I saw her like a light as pure as starshine flaming
And my sin, that thought to win that light, as dark again!
Her beauty smote my heart with pain beyond all naming.
Sing to my despair how 'twas you saw her then!"

And Love said, "I saw her in choicest sweet attire,
With greeting calm and kindly, as careless I were near.
She dreamed with quiet brows, crooning tunes beside the fire,—
But she smiled through her dreaming. I know she holds me dear!"

Love said to Worship, "How left you our lady,
At the end of yester-evening, that home you came so sad?"
Worship drooped his eyes, and soft and slowly said he,
"I bore a heavy burden, for the hope that I had.
I left her as a star set high beyond all hailing,
So pure none may endure her beams, of mortal men!
I left her thronged with angels, before her throne vailing!
Sing to my despair of how you left her then!"

And Love said, "I left her with thoughts that sought to flee me,
With hands withheld demurely, and low-voiced 'Come again!'
I left her turned aside, with eyes that would not see me,—
But when I passed the window she watched me from the pane!"

THE RIVAL CELESTIAL

God, wilt Thou never leave my love alone?
  Thou comest when she first draws breath in sleep,
    Thy cloak blue night, glittering with stars of gold.
Thou standest in her doorway to intone
  The promise of Thy troth that she must keep,
    The wonders of Thy heaven she shall behold.

Her little room is filled with blinding light,
  And past the darkness of her window-pane
    The faces of glad angels closely press,
Gesturing for her to join their host this night,
  Mount with their cavalcade for Thy domain!
    Then darkness . . . but Thy work is done no less.

For she hath looked on Thee, and when on me
  Her blue eyes turn by day, they pass me by.
    All offerings—ev'n my heart—slip from her hands.
She moves in dreams of utter bliss to be,
  Longs for what nought of earth may satisfy.
    My heart breaks as I clutch love's breaking strands.

I clutch—they part—to the wide winds are blown.
  And she stands gazing on a cloud, a star,—
    Blind to earth's heart of love where heaven lies furled.
God, wilt Thou never leave my love alone?
  Thou hast all powers, dominions, worlds that are;
  And she is all my world—is all my world!

THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER

Love, the wild fowler, spreads his nets with care,
And deep-toned warning both our hearts have heard,
Even as the old-time low-bell held each bird
Suddenly trembling, nestling pair by pair
Dark in the covert, till a blinding glare
Of torchlight and a clamorous shouted word
Dazed their bright eyes, and terrified wings upwhirred
To baffled blundering in the close-drawn snare.

So, sweet, we cower at our warning bell.
Creep close to me, where shadows gird us round.
Fear we that wild revealment? Nay, not we!
"Ah, perilous play, to cross Love's stalking-ground!"
You whisper . . . yet our eyes, our eyes could tell
Of hearts that leap to meet their certainty!

INVULNERABLE

Armorers met me at the marge of life,
Weapon-bearers, calling each his ware,—
How this shining sword, that sinuous knife,
Fashioned for the strife
In the forest depths that lay before,
Would ward off malice or could pierce despair,
Or this shield affright
All the hissing snakes in envy's hair,
Or, when temptation's sudden arrow sped,
How this buckler of stern proof and bright
Glanced the shaft, the tempter overbore;
Or this helm securely vizarded
Turned the thrusts of mockery and spite.

Loudly "Arm you! Arm you!" rose their cry;
And I chose a shield, indifference,
And a blade, sharp wit, for my defense.
Close-meshed mail beneath my gabardine
Glittered all unseen.
Proud I strode and whirled my sword on high.

Then my friend went by,
Passing in his shining joy unarmed,
With not even an amulet that charmed;
Singing for the innocence confessed
In his sparkling eyes, his buoyant breast;
Swiftly, gaily thrusting through the trees
To his deep and darkling forest doom
As I thought. But still before me goes,
Blithe and wonderful, his candid smile
Every ambushed shadow to illume,
And the quickening sympathy that glows
Sudden on his cheek when friends seem foes,
And his utter radiance without guile,
Merry ignorance, where I am—wise?

Where they lurk and snarl and close with me
All unscathed of foemen passeth he
Seeing no strife, unarmed eternally. . . .
And e'en the Terrors turn away their eyes!

THE SECOND COVENANT

I dreamt that we were lying
  On a high hill afar,
Our deepest thoughts replying
  To one lone star.
High from the vault of heaven
  Its silver rays were shed;
And the deep peace between us
  Was the peace of the dead.

Our busy lives were over,
  Our day and night and day;
Of you and me, your lover,
  Nought more to say;
And sorrows we had vanquished,
  And blisses we had known,
And our cares and our kisses
  To the four winds were blown.

The handclasp of contrition,
  The eyesight of each
Where each had recognition,
  Were passed, with our speech.
Vast night declared above us,
  "Now sight and semblance fade,
No heart's emotion bindeth
  A shadow to a shade."

Then within me, lying near you,
  A dark sadness grew
That, to cherish or to cheer you,
  There was nought left to do.
Of happy daily service
  Nought now remained to me—
Of good news for you and comfort
  As once it used to be.

No beauty save the spirit's
  Abode wide heaven's scrolls;
No charm the flesh inherits,
  No strength save the soul's;
As breath upon a mirror
  All recognizing sign.
Yet nearer far and dearer
  Your soul spoke to mine.

For viewed not of each other,
  But closer side by side
Than child unto his mother,
  Than husband to bride,
Thought unto thought you answered.
  One prayer we seemed—one breath;
And the deep love between us
  Was the love after death.

"I SAW AN ANGEL STANDING IN THE SUN"

I saw an angel standing in the sun.
Noon fields around him shimmered gold and green.
His curving pinions sheathed him in their white.
The soft roulades of breezes ceased to run
Rippling among the flowers. I knelt unseen,
Scarce drawing breath, before the magic sight.

Splendid and silent, wonderful and wise,
He shone in mail like moonlight, silver-blue;
Mailed hands upon a sword of flickering flame.
And, when he glanced, his iridescent eyes
With pangs of utmost anguish pierced me through—
Or utmost bliss—for none might give it name.

The haycock's violet shadows shimmeringly
Lengthened, as moments passed; but still he stood
In bright contours, with eyes that gazed afar.
A laggard cloud crept down the azure sky,
Drifting to anchorage o'er the drowsing wood.
Could one but know what thoughts of angels are!

Dreamed he night vigils and the challenge given
To brother cherubim who changed the guard
On parapets celestial? Did he hark
That glory of praise that shakes the gates of heaven
When Death's proud ship seeks anchor, darkly sparred,
At ghostly quays where spirits disembark?

Then all my surmise shook to mist again.
He moved; stooped glittering; slowly gathered up
A meadow flower, and held it to his cheek
As a child might for its reflection-stain.
Softly he stroked the small, bright buttercup. . . .
And his smile dawned with thoughts no soul can speak.

THE ICONOCLAST

He slid like lightning down the steeple,—
  Flashed through their streets like rapid flame,
    In rags and tatters red and yellow,
    With tongue in cheek—a waspish fellow.
He louped and leered at all the people
    And bade them blush for shame.

He seemed the gadfly Io lowed at,
  The sheep-tick in their sheepish wool.
    He woke their sleep with ribald laughter.
    Their prejudices quaked thereafter.
Their each sententiousness he strode at,
    And seized its nose to pull.

They held hard by their ancient steadings,
  While dust-clouds rose and cobwebs flew.
    Ubiquitous he pranced to pillage
    Each hallowed custom of their village.
Their rural prints all blazed with headings:
    "The dog shall have his due!"

Stout burgesses grew yellow-mottled
  With spleen. Stout constables pursued
    The whirling waif. Still laughing madder
    He banged them with his buffoon's bladder.
He choked their mayor scarlet-wattled,
    With cries of "Platitude!"

A town of pride, a town of decent
  And comfortable lights and views
    Was Snore-by-Day, with none to scorn it,
    When suddenly forthbuzzed this hornet,
Flame-hot, heretically recent,
    To startle and confuse.

So for his day he held the rostrum—
  Electric messenger to Earth!
    And eyes were rubbed and heart-beats heightened.
    The town awoke. The town was frightened.
They'll sleep again in half a lustrum—
    But, 'ware the wonder-birth!

THE SHADOWED ROAD

Our shadows moved before us on the road.
The trees that watched us brooded dark and still,
Streaked by the frost with phosphorescent gray.
Chill followed sharply on a gorgeous day
Of winds, blown leaves, red bonfires. Faintly showed
The mist-ringed moon above the pasture hill.

Our shadows moved before us. By our side
New mystery, throbbing through the rhythm of life,
Echoed our footsteps; and its presence grew
So real to me, I felt its power endue
An archangelic shape, whose phantom stride
Rhymed with our own who walked as man and wife.

Light fell upon us from the glimmering moon,
And light upon his face whose name is Love.
Ah, the rapt eyes, the tender, quickening gaze,
The splendor on that wild immortal face!
Then hurrying cloud possessed the heavens, and soon
I saw his shadow darken from above.

Beyond our own it stretched along the way,
The darkness of Death's cowl, more deep than night.
Gulfing our own, it blotted out the road,
The shadow of Love that brightest dreams forebode.
Yet, in my soul I found a thing to say:
"Though darkness go before, we walk in light.

"This is Love's answer!" For Death's night must move
Onward before two hearts that cast out fear,
Joined by the closest of immortal bonds.
They shall speak truth when prayer to prayer responds,
"Death but precedes us as the shade of Love.
Light falls about us from a surer sphere!"

AUTUMN

Autumn, like Atalanta, fleetly flees,
Galey robes streaming, leaf-blown down the wind;
And 'tis our pleading hearts that race behind
Striving to clasp her by her golden knees,
To stay her sorrowful beauty,—but the trees
Glance with her brilliant flight. Oh, grave and kind,
Hide ye no russet hoards, that we may find
And fling the apples of Hippomenes?

Clouded about with birds, fawn-nuzzled, still
Her speed outstrips us, and the woods are dead
Of dream or color—all their incense fled!
Across the burning marsh she gains the hill
And breathless turns her beautiful, bright head
And mocks with pagan laughter, sweetly shrill.

THE BLIND LEGION

Their drums roll on the night. Their fifes shrill up the dawn.
Their coming is of light.
Bright files, raised knee by knee, swing by perpetually.
Saith one, "They march in shame, ill-fame, or fouler name!"
But I know not in my heart.
I, who brood apart,
Know only in my heart: they are marching, marching on!

Uncaptained, rank by rank their tramp and tread rocks by.
No weapons gleam or clank,
And neither voice nor sign is flashed along their line.
Saith one, "They march with pride and boast that Heavens deride!"
But I know this verily
Who watch them secretly:
They are marching Whitherless with neither Whence nor Why!

Skies o'er them have they none but one unshining arch
Of Time. The years withdrawn
Roll down its western slope; and on its eastern cope,
Saith one, the years to be crowd forth unweariedly.
I only see their white
Stern faces in the night,—
I know only, without fear their dauntless dying march!

Their drums roll on the night. Their fifes shrill up the dawn!
With neither voice nor sight
Grim files, raised knee by knee, fade past perpetually.
Saith one, "They march in sin and shame, no bliss to win!"
But I know not, in my heart.
I, who brood apart,
Know only in my heart,—they are marching, marching on.

THE TAMER OF STEEDS

Beyond this world where skies are free from stain,
Where brilliant flowers blow in open meads,
I heard the drumming hooves of many steeds
Raise maddening music from a grassy plain.
They passed, with snorting nostril, flying mane,
And fiery spirit; and the lad who breeds
Their mettled herd, and pastures them, and feeds,
Rode the black foremost, scorning spur or rein.

His eyes were like a seer's and like a child's.
His body shone irradiating joy.
He fought his furious mount with strength and art.
And then my mind divined the glorious boy
As Eros, tamer in the heavenly wilds
Of all the passions of the human heart.

HIS ALLY

He fought for his soul, and the stubborn fighting
Tried hard his strength.
"One needs seven souls for this long requiting,"
He said at length.

"Six times have I come where my first hope jeered me
And laughed me to scorn;
But now I fear as I never feared me
To fall forsworn.

"God! when they fight upright and at me
I give them back
Even such blows as theirs that combat me;
But now, alack!

"They fight with the wiles of fiends escaping
And underhand.
Six times, O God, and my wounds are gaping!
I—reel to stand.

"Six battles' span! By this gasping breath
No pantomime.
'Tis all that I can. I am sick unto death.
And—a seventh time?

"This is beyond all battles' soreness!"
Then his wonder cried;
For Laughter, with shield and steely harness,
Stood up at his side!

MISTRESS FATE

Flout her power, young man!
She is merely shrewish, scolding,—
She is plastic to your moulding,
She is woman in her yielding to the fires desires fan.
Flout her power, young man!

Fight her fair, strong man!
Such a serpent love is this,—
Bitter wormwood in her kiss!

When she strikes, be nerved and ready;
Keep your gaze both bright and steady,
Chance no rapier-play, but hotly press the quarrel she began!
Fight her fair, strong man!

Gaze her down, old man!
Now no laughter may defy her,
Not a shaft of scorn come nigh her,
But she waits within the shadows, in dark shadows very near.
And her silence is your fear.
Meet her world-old eyes of warning! Gaze them down with courage! *Can You gaze them down, old man?*

THE SONG OF HER

Thou art my singing and my voice,
Thy life the thing that I would sing,
Perfect past words of perfect choice,
A lovely and a lasting thing.
In every deed of thine, sweetheart,
The poetry of heaven has part
Beyond the gamut of all art,
Leaving me mute and marvelling.

Thy deeds, like rhymes, I have by heart,
Thy happy deeds of heavenly choice,
Deeds that rise rapt and shine apart
As echoes of a perfect voice
Rise and rejoice when voices sing,
Linger and ring—linger and ring
Till heaven is of their echoing
And all the heights of heaven rejoice.

Thou art the song that I would sing,
The purest song of purest art,
Till men stand mute for marvelling,
Aye, till the singing break Man's heart
Where sorrows glory to rejoice
In perfect notes of perfect choice
And strains of One deep, tender voice
Transfigured joys from sorrows start.

In all this world I have no choice.
If I would sing a perfect thing,
Thou art my singing and my voice.
Poor rhymes that earn no welcoming—
Rhymes that are nothing learned in art,
From heaven, from her, such worlds apart—
Creep then unto her tender heart
And from her living learn to sing!

THE WRESTLERS

Tell me thy name, thou wrestler in the night,
Silent, cruel-sinewed, unbeheld of sight,
Ere another day bid my reason wake,
Ere the morning break!

Long we heave and strain, grip and slip and hold,
Struggling hard and lithe, warring from of old;
And thy greater strength strives unwearyingly.
Tell thy name to me!

Nay, thou hast me not! Yet a little space,
I can force thy hold, I shall see thy face.
Yet—the vantage slips. Loud my pulses beat
With foredoomed defeat.

Tell me thy name, wrestler great and bright,
Labouring heart to heart through this heavy night!
As when Israel's foe touched and scarred his thigh,
Wrenched at grips am I.

Silence. Shuddering breath. Graspings swift and blind.
All life's mystery grappling with the mind.
Peniel's silent power—Man's long fierce despite—
Wrestling through the night!

THE GUESTS OF PHINEUS

Man hungers long. Into his cup is poured
Wine of pearled brilliance or of flaming dyes
From gold and silvern ewers of the skies—
The sun and moon. And on his banquet-board
Rich lands of romance, glamorous seas, afford
His vision viands. Yet with upturned eyes
Like to poor Phineus, he still descries
The shadows overhead, the birds abhorred.

Ye dark enigmas of this universe,
Cloud not my feast! God, give me thoughts to face
And rend despair, as did the wingèd twain
Who soared above the baffled guests of Thrace
And hurled the harpies of Jove's ancient curse
To whirlwind ruin o'er the Ionian main!

SINCERITIES

I praised myself for nimble wit.
I viewed my jest with pride.
But a rock-spring was bubbling it,
And subtler jests beside.

My breathless ardor was my boast,
That raced the heights along,
Till a great wind from off the coast
Drowned it in sound and song.

I preened me on my mood serene,
And knew that mood was none
Beside the quietude of green
Hill-meadows in the sun.

My rational armor seemed of proof,
Yet who could hope to be
Reticent as the clouds aloof,
As stoic as a tree?

Where the sincerities possess
Mountain and wood and dune
My fool-bells of self-consciousness
Went jangling out of tune.

Gladder than I each flower is still,
Nobler are wind and sea,
More reverent is every hill
Than I may hope to be.

THE WATER-SPRINGS

Arbor and orchard in our soul's south land
Bore fruit on either hand;
And, caroling songs, we strayed among our vines
How hazard-gay, yet yearning beyond these,
Unsatisfied, for all our fruits and wines,
Thirsting through all sweet savours of all things,
Who drew no strength from faith and charity's
Higher and lower springs.

Joy's cloying fruits! We lacked strong grief,—no less,
Strict without bitterness;
Humility's purging draught clear-cold and keen.
The soul's sweet fields were ours at God's command.
All unrefreshed we gazed across their green,
Our plea the plea of Caleb's wistful daughter:
"—For thou hast given me a bright south land,—
Give also springs of water!"

SONG OF THE SATYRS TO ARIADNE

The satyrs sing to Ariadne. She is deserted by Theseus on Naxos, where Dionysus sues and wins her. The marriage-rout recedes into the forest.

Round the ivied bowl
  Rapturous in revels dear,
Maidens all, wild of soul,
  Gaily footing, curtsy here!
You whose wreaths aslant
  Show faun faces 'neath the green,
In mad shaggy mirth the chant
  Raise to this new woodland queen!

Airy legion—
  O'er your region
Phoebus in his tent above—
  Shower our singing
  With your winging
Golden darts of mirth and love!
  Brilliant feathered,
  Sunny-weathered
Birds of this our dream demesne,—
  As your chant is,
  Fauns, bacchantes,
    Hail the queen!

Toss the flowery chains!
  All the rosy rout delays.
Bronze, wild woodland swains,
  Twinkling horns, the pæan raise!
Cloven hooves, bare feet, beat time,—
  Brown-coned thyrses, sway and swing
Round the riot of this rhyme
  To our trolling woodland king!

As to Bacchus
  In Lampsacus
Roared the festal fires by night,
  Where mad riot
  Shook the quiet
Of dark forests crimson-bright,
  Let this even
  Ruddy levin
Roll around our bonfires' blaze!
  Hearts beat quicker
  To rich liquor
Broached in woodland ways!

Now these covert aisles
  Gloom from green. The furry folk
Steal to join our wiles.
  Dusk from alder and from oak.
Hares and dappled deer,
  Wonder-eyed they hem us round—
Forms familiar drawing near
  Phantoms of their hunting-ground.

Rosy misting
From this trysting,
Mænads, whirled in dizzy dance—
Cymbals clashing,
White limbs flashing—
Lure your lovers, laugh and glance!
Dark-shanked, swarthy
Satyrs for ye
Gambol gleesome, cry and call.
The dim moon swimming
Night o'erbrimming
Drenches gleams o'er all!

Bound with green and gay
Flowery and leafy chains
On our swaying way
Rollick mirth with tumult reigns!
Sleep the fresh warm mornings through,
Sleep not while dark skies so deep
Dazzle—myriad-starred—our crew!
Casual day for sleep!

Night hath spilt her
Purple philter
From the wine-skin of the sky!
Waking, leaping,
Our unsleeping
Comrades of the copse draw nigh.
Shake the staining
Lees remaining
From your carven goblets! Fill!
By the soaring
Bonfire's roaring
Mirth shall have its will!

Queen new-won of us,
(Sun thy crown, thy face the moon,
Pale and luminous!)
Wane not from our sight too soon!
House not with thy glorious spouse
Till once more the flaming wine
Drench our throats and dash our brows
To our queen divine!

PUCK'S SWEETHEART

Singeth the Spirit of the Weir:

Lie like a necklace light,
  Star-reflections, where she floats
Slowly toward the waterfall!
Birds all unmusical,
  Force faint cadence through your throats!
Lo, the lovely lady drowned!
Fauns in the forest round,
  Hark what this midnight notes!

Singeth a faun:

She was our woodland queen,
Gowned in the green and gold;
Court in the copse did hold,
  Throne in the thicket swayed.
  She was daringly arrayed,
Robed in the bronze and red.
Spring and Autumn turned her bed.
  Summer was her blithe handmaid!

Wildly we loved her,
  We of the woodland ways;
  Vassalled her nights and days.
Nought of it moved her.
She was sunlight on the sward,
  A flicker through the green,
An elfin note of laughter,
  Silvers of the birch between!

Singeth a fairy:

By the brown pool
  Lay she adream one day.
Over her shoulder
Puck peeped the bolder.
Oh, for his mirthful face
  Then grew she fain, they say.
Darling-wild she hunted him
  Laughing her nay!

Through golden gloom
Fast went their flying feet;
Down the green glade
  Darted disorder.
Berry-stained loveliness,
Feet the grass clutched to kiss!
Roguish, oh roguish Puck,
    Nought to accord her!

Singeth the Spirit of the Weir:

Clung he the rainbow
Risen o'er the river.
Leaped she like light,—

And with wail dropped to death.
Weep, nets that drew her drowned!
Wail, elfin fish, that found
Love without breath!

Lie like a necklace light,
Star-reflections, where she floats
Down to her tidal bier!
Birds, sing no bridal here!
Moan all the woodland throats,
Aching for the lady drowned.
Puck heaves in sobs profound.
Woe, woe this midnight notes!

LOVE IN ARMOR

Love scorns that Love implore you
To bind his hurts or heal;
Prays only, arm around you,
To draw on hours that hound you,
To whirl his sword before you
And fence your path with steel.

Not for the beauty of you,
The peace of all your ways,
He burns,—but in your quarrel
To hold the pass of peril,
To stand at arms above you
Against embattled days.

No comfort for his blundering
He cries your heart to yield,
But that his arm enfold you,
His shield-arm shield and hold you
Safe, while the foe charge thundering,—
His sword against the field!

AN EMISSARY TO HEAVEN

Gray snow adrift whirled down the wind,
The smothered highways left behind,
And scattered lights from hamlets far
Waned, dimmed, and died. A single star
Pierced the eternity of night;
  Amain I rode and sang!
While, from high heaven beyond my sight,
"God speed, God speed thee to the light!"
  The seraph broadswords rang.

One in black rides on the left,
  One in gray behind,
    One in red storm-blown ahead,
And on the right rides one bereft
  Of cloak or blade, the scornful wind
    Scourges his naked head!

The wind held phantom voices shrill,
Held voices that were never still;
And down the cruel night's keen scorn
Shapes fled me, with a shroud forlorn—
The black shroud that they wove for me!—
  Yet on I rode and sang.
And from dark heaven dreadfully,
"Three, three there be are false to thee!"
  The seraph broadswords rang.

One in black has whispered, "Fail!"
  One in gray, "Turn back!"
    One in red a word of dread;
But, at right hand, "Thou canst not quail!
  What though thy soul is on the rack—
    Hearths are to guard!" one said.

The cold gave bitter draughts to slake
My burning thirst for haste and wake
Hot hidden wounds; where hope had been
The cold thrust barb and javelin
'Twixt plate and plate of my weak mail;
  Yet still I rode and sang!
And, wilder o'er the towering gale,
"Prevail, prevail—wilt thou prevail?"
  The seraph broadswords rang.

One in black has twitched my cloak,
  One in gray whined low,
    One in red—"Misled! Misled!"
But, at right hand, a low voice spoke,
  "Warden of souls—they named thee so—
    Art thou then vanquishèd?"

Wrestled night's passions for my heart.
The fearful powers of night upstart
Panting to throttle will and soul.
"A bitter toll, a bitter toll!
A dark grave and a winding sheet!"
  Yet still I rode and sang.
And, clashing over storm and sleet,
"Defeat, defeat—canst brave defeat?"
  The seraph broadswords rang.

One in black my throat has grasped,
  One in gray mine arm,
    One in red has flashed a blade;
But, at right hand, "No fear!" one gasped.
  "I succour thee!" (My heart beat warm.)
    "Ride on, ride on!" he said.

Then sullenly the bitter night
Dimmed grayly, and a welcome light
Of morning and mine errand's end
Ran to me, clasped me, called me friend.
The gate, the great gate swung aside,
  And in I rode and sang,
While round me 'bout in flashing tide,
"To thee all hail for thy good ride!"
  The seraph broadswords rang.

Black Despair we thrust him through,
  Slew gray Half-faith with scorn.
    Fear in red, we left for dead.
Through storm, wild dark, and peril too
  My Trust had won us, scourged and torn,
    Dawn—and our errand sped!

MORGIANA DANCES

  Aha! A guest!
Within my master's house, a guest—
  To eat
  With his meat
    No salt?
    Say you so!
    His vest—his vest—
What glitters through his merchant's vest?
  Fast and fleet! Tabor, beat!
  Round again we go!

Scarves about my head—so!
Silver girdle, flash—ho!
Round again—again we go.
Round again—again we go.
Chalk upon the panel there;
Oil upon the pave—beware!
A guest, ho! A guest, ho!
A sweet guest, ho!

Laden mules, laden mules
Came within our court there.
Who boil
In their oil?
The thieves?
Say you so!
Fair fools—fair fools!
The moon saw the sport there!
Spin, spin! Tabor, din!
Round again we go!

Thieves' beards be red—so!
Poniard, forth and flash—ho!
Round again—again we go.
Round again—again we go.
Master Ali, drunk with wine.
Houssain, only I divine!
A guest, ho! A guest, ho!
A sly guest, ho!

For treasure, for pleasure
Stabbed and plotted many men.
The fox
Picked the locks.
The springe
Seized him—so!
Full measure—full measure!
Purses for my dancing, then?
Purple are the shadows;
The lamps red and low.

Poniard at my breast—so!
Poniard at thy breast—ho!
Round again—again we go.
Round again—again we go.
Here's a dagger's smart should be
Salt for such villainy!
A guest, ho! A guest, ho!
A dead guest, ho!

THE RUNNERS

Limbs that falter and fail to guide us,
  Eyes that are blind to the shining goal—
We have striven, Lord, and our minds deride us,
  Shaken of body and sick of soul.
Wilt thou hear us now as we stagger on?
The race is run—but the goal is gone.

Fleet from the start like a cleaving sabre,
  Our course lay straight and we laughed for strength.
Forth from the ruck where the weaklings labor,
  Well to the forefront we won at length.
Wilt thou hearken now to our gasping cries?
Who lied of a prize where there is no prize?

We passed them by who fell spent or meanly
  Dropped from the running, or gazed and sneered.
Still laughed our blood and our limbs moved cleanly.
  Well worth the strife was the goal we neared.
Now, Lord, thou hast sealed our eyes from light.
Is the end but night—is the end but night?

Others might lag—we were born for running.
  Others might dally—for us the race!
We have striven fairly, no trial shunning,
  And now on our hope thou hast veiled thy face.
If our hope mistook, canst thou blame us, Lord?
Thou hast taken from us our just reward!

Then the voice of the Lord from his cloud of fire:
  "To each have I shown the bounds that be,
Yet goals ye seek and to crowns aspire.
  Joy ye not in the striving that ends with *Me?*
Shaped I man not to strive and to shun release?
I am goal and laurel! The prize is—Peace!"

EMPIRE

I saw the glorious ocean breaking
  Sapphire beneath a sapphire sky,
The thundering surges whitely shaking
  Their manes of surf on high.

I saw the black rocks drenched and gleaming
  Before th' assault of wave on wave,
Till up the sands the tide went streaming
  Royal with ermine kings might crave.

The sun o'er all progressed his heaven
A rajah of a naos golden,
And, drawing round him shrouds of even,
He sank in gorgeous pomp and olden.

Life! Life! Thy magi still adore thee
But fail for offerings, fail and fall
In overwhelmed despair before thee
That hast earth, stars, sea, sun and all!

THE LOVER'S VIGIL

Breathe a song for love's delight
'Twixt the sleeping and the waking!
Starbeams on her pillow white,
Halo her in yellow light!
Is her bosom tranquil quite?
Oh, so still, her heart seems breaking!
'Twixt the sleeping and the waking,
Breathe a song for love's delight!

Smile for love a little while,
Now her dreams are rosy round her
And her couch a fragrant isle
Floating in a sea of smile!
Waking, what may reconcile
For the Edens slumber found her?
Now her dreams are rosy round her,
Smile for love a little while!

'Tis a dusk of butterflies.
All the twilight stirs with sleeping.
Through her casement, drowsy-wise
Peers the moon of Paradise.
Blossom mouth and violet eyes,
What to you a gray world's weeping?
Draw the curtains! Leave her sleeping
In a dusk of butterflies!

TO CHILDREN

I. FAIRY SONG.

While clouds yet slumbered in their fold,
Ere sun, God's glorious marigold,
Pushed forth his fervent, fiery head
To shine above the garden bed
Of earth, whose blooms are hours,
Spinney and woodland's entries through
Those morning-glory trumpets blew
That summoned forth the flowers:

"Now haste ye, Mab's sweet abigails,
And dress your queen for day!
With flounces and with furbelows,
With silver shoes and ribband bows.
The dawn comes up this way—
Tara!
The dawn comes up this way!"

Her violet eyes wee hands unclose,
And sweetly, sweetly up she rose.
Her robing-room is damask-dark
Wherein the fireflies touch their spark
To tapers hung on high.
So cherished and so dainty-sweet—
Her maidens kneel before her feet
To do her courtesy!

For equerries she shall not lack,
Jack-booted, bee-bestriding,
To hand her up a-cricket-back
And squire her down the greenwood track
All in her early riding—
Oh,
All in her early riding!

For they do tell, oh, they do tell,
The charmèd Caterpillar Dell
Holds bearded bravos, fuzzed o' fear,
At passers-by that growl and rear
On greedy tribute bent!
But Mab's brave squires' blades be good
That slew the toad o' Bullrush Wood,
And sword-play is their stent!

This do I know who peer between
The grass blades every morn,
And mosses find the green demesne
Of many a crownèd king and queen—
For I was Elfland-born,
My dear!
Yes, I was Elfland-born!

2. BRAGGARTS.

This morning by my garden wall,
  This morning as I came,
The gipsy-clad nasturtiums all
  Lit up my heart like flame!

Their ragged, brilliant little bells
  Were gay with sunset fires
And oh, the tale their leader tells,
  Who knows their soul desires!

Oh, we have marched by sunset seas
  And danced through eerie noons;
Through lilac twilights, dense with bees,
  Have fleered our mad platoons!

"Gemmed with bright rains, when gutters ran
  Dun floods the byways through,
The village folk have gaped to scan
  The passing of our crew!

"By olden ports, by downs and dunes,
  By fabled lost countrees,
Our rollick feet have danced to tunes
  That none know but the bees!

"Swart are our hearts with elfin fire,
  And strange the urge we know;
And now we flicker with desire
  To flit, to march, to go!"

And yet this evening, when I scanned
  For that which might befall,
Drowsed stood my bright nasturtiums, and
  All dreaming by the wall!

3. THE GOLDEN DAY.

When dim across the lawn, before the break o' day, their gleams are grown,
The lights o' dew, the sprites o' dew, that flit to find their cloud,
In golden-dappled forest glooms still richer, rarer dreams are shown,
Where harebells flicker drenched in sun, and wood-doves sob aloud.

Then, heart, 'tis up and far to be this day of all the days o' dream!
Through woodland rides of woven boughs, by pools of laughing light,
'Tis light of foot and young and wild to seek the woodland ways o' dream,
To race in thrilling freedom with all forest things in flight.

We 'll dance adown the billowing hills. Gay-plumaged birds shall soar to us.
We 'll plunge in thickets berry-bright and stain our lips with mirth.
We 'll stretch our arms to waterfalls with laughter as they roar to us,
The fruits and flowers of childhood ours—the plenty-horn of earth!

Oh, we 'll be wild and young and free! The hare shall blink bright eye to us.
The dappled deer shall nuzzle us and race to lead us on.
No woodland way shall covert be, no woodland creature shy to us.
And night shall be bird-minstrelsy outrivaling the dawn.

Oh, we 'll be gay and rollick too, our throats athrill with caroling,
Your hair with rippling sunlight one, your lips apart for joy!
Of hue and scent of sky and wood we 'll weave our rare appareling.
The sun shall be our bauble then—the silver moon our toy!

So, tired with day, on twilight heights when sunset rivers darkening
Bring night on far horizons, and the stars to gem the night,
We 'll watch the lustrous moon arise, to far field-music harkening,
Till fireflies dance the purple dales, and slumber veils our sight.

And then, within the court of sleep, where man and beast lie down at last,
Where shadows weave, and wistfully the radiant visions rain,
Between the moonrise and the sun bright dreams shall prove our crown at last,
And, safe from storm, wide wings and warm enfold our sleep again!

4. THE FAIRY REALM.

Oh, we smiled our silent pity when they mocked our faith as fond!
Well we knew the stately city past the bounding of beyond,
    All its streets with sunshine glowing,
    All its towers with banners flowing.
We were going, we were going to its jasper gates beyond!

There the mages flout at sages, and the knights-at-arms are there,
And the little Princess Wildrose, letting down her golden hair—
    In the night of dreams and roses,
    When her casement latch uncloses—
To the Prince the tale supposes climbs its shimmering like a stair.

There are flagons, there are dragons, there rings Merlin's mystic tune!
There are wizards, weirdsome lizards, and the gardens of the Moon;
    Fairy kings in strange disguises
    And such combats and surprises;
Harps and flowers and haunted bowers, magic cap and magic shoon!

There the centuried sleepers waken, spells encoil or set one free,
And the gold-leaved trees are shaken with a rune of mystery,
    And forever and forever
    Float fair sirens on the river,
Sing bright maidens by the river, spinning silks o' glamourie!

Oh, the blue sea that shimmers from a golden, golden shore,
And the jeweled state that glimmers through each pillared palace door!
    Forest depths of glinting beryl
    Whispering quests of daunting peril—
And, at night, the musicked dancing, whirling down each glassy floor!

How we smile to hear them saying there is no such land at all!
For the fairy steeds are neighing in each marble fairy stall—
    Yes, the fairy steeds are prancing,
    With their studded bridles glancing—
And tonight we 'll be a-dancing at a dazzling fairy ball!

5. DAME HOLIDAY.

No such a name as Holiday I thought me to have found
Till I went forth this holy day beyond the city's round
Of milling wheels and clanging bells
Where smoke is dark and clamor swells,
And wandered to the ground
Of Holiday, Dame Holiday,
Dressed in her best Dame Holiday,
And in a fair compound!
For grasses green and grasses blue
Made o'er her dancing plat for new
And arching skies of lovelier hue
Walled round her dancing ground!
No such a name as Holiday? She hath her acres yet!
In cramosie and taffeta; and pranked with blooms, to laugh at a
Poor grown-up dullard blinking small, she foots her dewy-wet
And sun-warm pastures, curtsying sweet, with budding lips and twinkling feet!

She whirled me through a merry dance—Dame Holiday her clown!
The fields reeled round our whirling waltz, the sun shook, laughing down;
And odors out of Araby and gems and blooms of dream
Swirled from her vivid, gracious gown with glow and glint and gleam!

I crowned myself of holiday
With sesame and rue.
The world oped gates that holy day
And nature passed me through!
Old grandsire mountains leant their knees, and I was companied by trees
To gaze upon the wrestling seas
And look beyond the view!

At Acre and Byzantium were wonders shown of old
From looms, from mines, from vats, from vines rich spoils and manifold,
But Holiday had wand for more
Than ever man had seen before
If that the truth were told!

The little gnomes that work in mines, the folk of glades and trees,
And butterflies like valentines, and boist'rous birds and bees
We gathered for our retinue to dance and prance the hours through
With mystery and history and worlds beyond the view!

This rhyme be just for holiday. The world was colored then.
The clouds went marching up the blue like hosts of fighting men.
I carol out of tune and time
O child, for you a failing rhyme—
Let fall my futile pen—
And reach my arms to Holiday, Dame Holiday, Dame Holiday—
Through walls to float to Holiday from moil and toil and men!

No such a name as Holiday? This let my rhyme be worth:
Go search for Mistress Holiday the ends of all the earth!
Then, an' you find her dancing there
In her wide countryside,
And such rare sun and green and air as did to me betide,
Then, an' you find her warm and rare
In God's great garden-place—
Tell her I found her fond and fair, and that I loved her face!

6. BIRDS OF THE AIR.

"A bird of the air shall carry the Voice."

Oh, the birds of the air, in the sky far up there,
They are winging, they are singing—the birds of the air.
More purely than all passion—bright, bright above all pain,
The birds of the air, they are calling you again!

For on high the windy meadows of skyland are blest
With golden lights, blue shadows, high turrets where they nest—
With the merlons and the embrasures of cloud castles white,
Where warm sunshine enchants them from morn to starry night.

So they trill from tree and lawn and the leaves of our eaves,
But they fly from us for rapture of a world that bereaves
This world of light and substance. They soar and find the true
Where our care covets glory in bliss beyond the blue.

Aye, when colors like to music—magic music—suffuse
The skies, with dawn or evening, they soar for fuller news.
They choir before the maiden East. They cloud her golden hair.
Through the sally-ports of sunset wing the birds of the air.

The birds of the air, in the blue far up there,
They are winging, they are singing—the birds of the air.
More purely than all passion—bright, bright above all pain,
The birds of the air, they are calling you again!

"I REMEMBER MY MOTHER"

I remember my mother
In the deep still night-time,
When books were on the shelves again
And toys were put away,
When the moonlight filled my bed-room
And the shadow-time, the flight-time
Of happy, sleepy memories
Remade the merry day.

How soft the door was opened,
How swift she stole upon me,
With covers for my carelessness,
Awake enough to see
Her silver dress of silentness,
Her wistful brows that won me;
To feel her touch upon me,
And the way she looked at me!

The book that always slipped from bed
Was smiled upon and taken.
The clothes that lay both far and near
Were folded on the chair,
And, last, she kissed me lightly,
So lightly—not to waken,
And her white arms were about me,
And her soft dark hair.

And charger-borne afar that night
Through spectral lands and lonely,
With elves close riding
For some dungeoned castle-keep,
I thought, "My pretty Mother!
I wear her favor only."
I thought, "My lovely Mother!"
And smiled in my sleep.

PERSONALITY

With words of other men, with memories
Bewildered quite,
Strange with a pulse that, quicker than all these,
Tells wrong from right,
My mind marks thought on thought that flits and flees
By day and night.

Flickering a thousand thoughts of hope and fear,
Of joy and pain,
To the events that rouse, the moods that veer
Each day again,
Harried and clamorous, alert and clear,
So shifts my brain.

A treasure-house, a fairyland, a waste,
A field of war;
Jewelled with constellations, and erased
Of every star;
Save in dead sleep immediate with haste
To make or mar;

Such is mine instrument upon mine act,
With something there
Battling its baser fears to found on fact
Whate'er shines fair
Throughout its round; to reason, to exact;
Flash praise or prayer.

As one who through a train's swift window sees
The fields at night
Shift and change form, behind their flickering trees,—
The moon's pale light
Show foaming falls—a forest's mysteries—
High mountains bright.

So my brain holds and loses vision of
Whoe'er devised
Our life-long questioning, our life-long love;
Blindly apprised
Of miracle; athrill with each new move
To Truth new-guised.

And the blood burns or shivers through my veins,
And the fleet days
Possess me with their fugitive sharp pains,
Sweet pangs, delays
And onsets,—and my million brother brains
Scan me at gaze.

From the hot hearts of all my ancestry,
Their mental toils,
My heart takes fire, the mind they gave to me
Snatches its spoils;
And no man knows me, nor myself I see
Through all that foils.

Friends mark me by my pleasure or my task.
My lips have speech.
They read by these, and I; yet ever ask
Nor find in each
That Self which, till this Pythian world unmask,
No man may teach.

THE WARDROBE OF REMEMBRANCE

Guises your moods once wore are hung within
The closet of my mind. I take access
This moment to regard them and confess
How spare for want of you they hang, and thin.
Pity seems all their argument may win,
That fine, frail rustling of each mood's meet dress.
Yet starts a subtle incense from the press,
Crushed perfumes of the flowers your thoughts have been.

Sweeter than e'er you spoke them do they come
Again with finer relish to my mind
Starved on your absence. False surmise is numb,
For now in these reliques of you I find
The smile you meant when rebel lips were dumb,
The kind words agitation made unkind.

MARTYRS TO THE MAN

Innocent thought, romantic dream, and happy, unsuspicious love,
Three comrades of my youth,
Three sons of shining Truth;
Mine eyes beheld them hand in hand treading a flowered meadow-land,
Singing renown and fame and the town toward which they came.

In azure tunic, golden mail, and a robe that bore a burning heart,
They footed through the daisies,
Singing their Father's praises,
Till high above them dark of frown arose the wall of the Iron Town.
Ah, then they glowed elate, and strode beneath the gate.

But scarcely had they laughed along to linger in the market square
When folk from stalls and booths
Beset the shining youths.
They haled them where a pillar stood black with smoke and red with blood.
There, for no guilt, they bound them, and built the fagots round them.

And now I saw my martyred boys with lips aghast and frozen eyes,
Through flames of writhing fire
Staring across their pyre,
While burghers of the Iron Town danced all like mountebank and clown,
By smoke made scant of breath, to chant the fortunate death

Of innocent thought, romantic dream, and happy, unsuspicious love,
As, lapped in fiery light,
They shrivelled from my sight,
And dark, flame-litten figures whirled around the ruin of my world.
For, now these three were sped, in me my youth lay dead.

Yet, thinning as the smoke dispersed, the heavy ashes of the pyre
Heaved, and two armored hands
Scattered the smoldering brands.
Then, from the sacrificial heap, I saw a stalwart figure leap,
And secret dawn and wise shone in his steady eyes.

His corselet bore a blazing star set in a murky midnight sky.
His either hand displayed
A lantern and a blade.
One holds the guarded flame of Doubt no wind from heaven may quite blow out.
One points to turn the blow of stern Despair, the foe.

The burghers of the Iron Town broke up their dance to hear his cry:
"Here a Man's soul stands tried,
Where Youth hath darkly died.
I bear the heavy helm of years, who once knew neither wounds nor fears,—
And comic-tragic arms, where magic glowed the charms

"Of innocent thought, romantic dream, and happy, unsuspicious love!
But these my feres be dead.
I bear their hopes instead."
Then, striding through the crowd, askance the eyes of all refused his glance.
Forth from their gate he strode where Fate made straight the road.

THE PARLOUS THING

The villainous tract he knew.
  Boulders were its wear.
Black and steely blue
  Its girth in the low moon-glare.
Between his gauntlet palms
  He raised his good sword drawn:
"Who comes this night to ask an alms?
    Say on, sword, say on!"

"First, Beauty radiant-bright;
Second, the Fiend in red;
Third, with Yourself this night you fight;
And that is all," it said.
Sudden he fell adread.

On the split and stubborn ground
  His proud steed pawed again.
False Beauty, without sound
  Stood—as she dawns on men,
Her naked body dressed
  In the colored mists of dawn. . . .
As the steel he drew from her cloven breast:
    "Say on, sword, say on!"

"A hard thing, that to meet,—
  Yet well you held the field.
The Fiend should treat at your mailèd feet.
  But to One your steel must yield!"
To ice his blood congealed.

His charger's mane tossed back,
  As the white foam flew in wrath.
The Fiend, in red and black,
  With mockery barred the path.
Swift as a snake! At grips
  Like a tiger set upon! . . .
He wiped dark blood from his sword's blue lips.
    "Say on, sword, say on!"

"Trenchant! But feel your side
  Twined by the Parlous Thing,
More than Derision to deride,
  Faster than flesh to cling!"
Hissing his brain did sing.

The Thing came flowingly
  Against his side, all warm!
"Two you have slain for fear of me,
  And I take o'er the charm;
For I am the fear within your brain,
  The weakness in your arm,
Your Self of inmost treachery, lechery, and alarm!"

Such were ill plight to know
  Between the dark and dawn.
Struck that good knight his final blow?
  Shrunk he to sob and fawn?
Was this the hour of overthrow?
  . . . Say on, sword, say on!

PATERNITY

Not only women dream the future's child
Or children, though such deep desire they bear
For all the rich rewards of motherhood,
They smile in travail; though each girl ungrown
Who sings her dolls uncertain lullabies
Sees infant faces, feels soft arms that cling,
Hears deep within the nursery of her heart
A medley of small mirth adorable,
And, as she grows, mothers all things she loves,
Lacking the little head against her breast
And yearning for it, when she cannot know
Wherefore she yearns. Yet sometimes to a man,
Roughest and sternest though he be of men,
Shocked into strength and pondering from his young
Exuberance and easy joy, there comes
A longing that convulses all his soul;
And, standing in the wind against some dawn's
Prospect of racing cloud and lightening sky,
Or hard-beset in battle with the world
Deep in the city's stridence, or at pause
Before some new-discovered truth of life,
Unwittingly his hands go out to touch,
Hold off, and scan the youth of him that was,
Thrill to that brighter youth it is decreed
Each father shall inherit from his son.
And, if his hands grope blindly, so his heart,
To hear a young voice at his shoulder speak,
Know young, elastic strides beside his own,
Resolve the problems of an unsullied heart
Flaming to his for counsel. I scarce-grown
Into my manhood, hovering, hovering still
Over by boyhood (as the gravest, oldest
Of men doth yet, or is no man of men),
Felt my heart tense, and but a noon ago
Strove in quick torture—for no woman's arms,
No woman's eyes, but for a questioning voice
Beside me, and a sturdy little step
In rhythm with mine. A phantom face looked up,
Trusting, round-eyed, alive with curious joy;
And all my being yearned: My son! My son!

REMARKS TO THE BACK OF A PEW

All this whining and repining!
Oh good lack,
All this blue-nosed, dismal wailing
That the fount of faith is failing!
Have ye all gone sick and ailing,
Good my masters? Give me back
But a laugh against my laughter,
And forget a little while
Your much-harped-upon "Hereafter"
In a smile!

From your pigeon-toed religion,
Lord deliver
One who never saw his Savior
As a "model of behavior,"
But a man of might, who gave your
Creeds full many a text to shiver
Into bits your gravest thesis
And your dearest dogma's blight.
You can thank your own paresis
If I 'm right.

While you 're moaning of "atoning
For our sins,"
Where old women sniff and mutter,
There 's bright sunlight through the shutter.
How the wood-birds sing and flutter
Round the church! A wind begins
In the ivy-leaves, all glistening
With the early morning sun.
"Saith the preacher—" . . . I 'm not listening.
Have you done?

You 're the cynics, with your clinics
On the soul!
While you fumble facts and rumble,
Is it easy to be humble,
When I hear, through all your mumble,
God's own anthems rise and roll
Round the outcast Unforgiven
Yester-morning damned by—you!—
As the highest gates of Heaven
Pass them through!

Here 's my severance from your reverance
For the smug.
While the human 's so endearing,
While all nature is revering
One glad God, with naught of "fearing,"
Shall I rock myself, and hug

All my "goodness" safe inside me,
'Twixt four walls and once a week?
God Himself would first deride me,
Saying, "Seek!"

Oh, what psalter round the altar
Of the East,
With wild dawn the winds upchoir!
With what prayer the sunset's pyre
Smokes to heaven! And what desire
For pure Truth that pale, sad priest
Of blue heaven, the moon, illumines
When the candle stars burn bright!
What sweet dreams God sends for omens
Through the night!

There, as ever, I shall never
Cease to kneel,
In God's true church, life,—adoring
All its wonder, and imploring,
Of His grace, for joy upsoaring
O'er all pangs that hurt and heal.
Teach me such Thy true salvation,
God of strength through joy set free,
As Thou meant'st from the creation
It should be!

RITUAL

Lord God, what may we think of Thee,
Save that in stars we drink of Thee,
Save that in the abundance of Thy sunlight we have seen
Thine excellent intention;
And Thy marvelous invention
In great and little living things and all the grades between?

Lord God, what may we pray to Thee
Who know our hearts give way to Thee
Surely at last in secret depths, though protest long denies,
And that to live is wonder
With worlds above and under
Unreached of any mortal heart, blurred to all mortal eyes?

Lord God, the fitting praise to Thee
Rather would seem to raise to Thee
Only pure honesty of mind, waiting Thy stalwart will;
Like as the hills believe Thee,
Like as the seas receive Thee,
Like as the trees whose rustlings cease,—who hear Thee and are still!

MALIGNED MORTALITY

In upper space, in the nether abyss,
'Twixt which our Earthly spheroid drifts,
Rapture there is and torment there is—
    But never the mortal gifts.

As in upper azure, in nether night
Where the wicked are flayed for their souls' rebirth,
They know pain as the virtuous know delight—
    But both have need of Earth.

When the virtuous grow too good for God,
When the spirit of sin seems quenched, not changed
To a purer and braver flame—His nod
    Shows them the Earth they ranged.

Then, while demons lean on their goads, the bad
With tormented eyes upturn their sight
To the vivid human life they had,
    Passing above their night.

Then the cherubs point from Heaven to praise,
And the flustered spirits may not pray,
But peer from on high, and must mark the ways
    Of such folk as once were they.

How salutary for blessed and cursed,
Where goodness and sin are so much discussed!
For most of Heaven was just—at first—
    This humorous human dust!

And most of Hell dreamed noble strife,
On Earth, with such thieves as Time and Fate.
Re-viewing the dauntlessness of life
    They feel less desolate!

So, though many a creed discount her worth,
Here is a dream for the dead of night:
That Hell takes heart at our mother Earth
    And that Heaven does her right.

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE

"These bloodless conventionalists in modern love."
— *The Advocate of Passion.*

My love walks scatheless through the fire.
Yea, in the furnace of desire,
Like its white core irradiate
With impulse strong and passionate,
My love uplifts a gloried face.
Nor angels fail me in that place—
Such angels of supreme desire
As walked by Shadrach in the fire!

Before the golden shape of Lust
I saw men prostrate in the dust;
Homage like that of days long gone
On Dura's plain by Babylon.
Their wailing grows. Their breath comes sharp
When sounds the shawm or twangs the harp,
When cries the herald, "Lord is Lust!
Bow down and worship in the dust!"

The laughing fiend who bids this thing,
Like as of old that evil king,
Hath heard by night and heard by morn
The challenge of mine utter scorn.
Therefore from out his furnace I
Must lift my hated voice to cry
The passion that transcends this thing
Wrought by Hell's old and evil king.

My love walks scatheless through the fire.
The angel of supreme desire.
Stooped toward me through the thickening flame.
The utter glory of his name
Goes through me like a piercing sword.
Purity's passion is my lord,
Fashioned of far more pulsing fire
Than gods of all abased desire.

He looks aghast, their king, nor dares
To hear me chant his quick despairs—
Great pæans that shake Heaven's glowing hall,
Whence angels all antiphonal
Sound harps of sudden storming bliss
Shaken from Heaven's heart, that is
Most passionate with love that dares
Every disaster—all despairs!

Cleaving to one in whom it flowers,
Higher and greater its glory towers;
The passion of love's purity
Reaching to Heaven in verity.

Before their idols, smeared with dust,
Grovel the little slaves of lust;
But crowned with red immortal flowers
Even to God's height Love's triumph towers!

Laughing for Love's enduring name,
This have I seen who walked the flame
And step from out the furnace-blast
Unscorched, unscathed. His face aghast,
The laughing fiend can work no fear
With quivering whispers in mine ear
Of "passion." Fool! Round pure Love's name
Burns the supreme, surpassing flame!

"ALWAYS I KNOW YOU ANEW"

I press my hands on my eyes
And will that you come to me.
Your semblances shimmer and rise;
Yet 'tis never your self I see,
Never the exquisite grace
And the bright, still flame of you.
So, when I meet you face to face,
Always I know you anew!

Faint visions I saw, instead
Of your brows direct and wise,
Of the little lilt of your head
And your dark-lashed, sky-clear eyes,
Of the soft brown braids demure,
The poise as of quiet light,
The perfect profile, sweet and pure,
Never I dream you aright.

And new in endless ways,
By your blessèd heart unplanned,
It is mine to surprise each sweeter phase,
Adore you, and understand;
For through every delicious change in you
Truth burns with a clear, still flame;
And, though always I know you anew,
Always I find you the same!

PANORAMA

Street sights! Street sounds! The wonder of it grows.
Here in the midst of Babel I would wait
And mark the eddying throes
And labors of this maelstrom fed by Fate.

Bright color interweaves,—
No sober staidness and no calm design.
Here, with the pomp and play of afternoon on autumn leaves,
High lights and vivid colors glow and shine.

The gray-massed masonry strikes a dull leaden note
Above the crawling crowds—yet, as in dream,
Past walls of many a golden cavern-throat
Uninterrupted pours the motley stream.

And faces call me. Heavy brows, loud tongues,
Or pale pastels of sharp despair flash by.
Ladder of life, that sinks its lower rungs
Deep in the anguish of humanity!

Romance with beggary at shoulder-press,
Momus and Artemis in step to tunes
That flaunt from tawdry arcades of ingress
'Mid roars from life's buffoons!

An old sad man, drooped with a weight of thought,
Rasps at a violin in plaintive key.
There was an age when the nine maids were brought
Not low so easily!

Buildings, the hopes you hide, the hard-won joys,
Your glory of toil, dim now your grimmer guise.
Rank upon rank your martyr host deploys
To daily sacrifice,

But see! As even-change turns gold to gray
With sudden hush, here—even here—the calm
Voice o'er man's tumult of the end of day
Thrills like a radiant psalm.

Life's mire hides pearls,—aye, pearls of secret splendor!
There a drab, home-bound laborer stands erect
Before a fire-shot spire, and worn eyes render
Homage the calloused heart can scarce suspect.

I heard a work-girl singing to her lover
What doubts, what dreams there are;
And then—man's courage streamed the wild skies over,
And flamed from every star!

THE FLAME-BRIDE

O'er the red hearth of Time
  Leans the fire-maker.
Men's lives are fagots bound
That serve this fagot breaker,
Bowed o'er his flame-bride,
  Breathing till he wake her.

His head blots out the stars.
  He leans across all heaven.
Earth steams up with prayer.
Sunset pleads replevin.
Men are the fagot fuel
  Bound in his bavin.

He feeds the fire of Time
  Whose flames are bliss and weeping.
He leans across the world
When the world is sleeping,
Fanning with soft breath
  The watch-fire he is keeping.

But still his flame-bride sleeps
  Whose raiment is of wonder.
Faint flickerings show her face.
She stirs in sleep thereunder,
Until she rise in lightnings
  And shake the world with thunder.

Enormous on the night,
  The shadow of her lover
Bows across voids of space
And feeds the flames above her;
Men's lives his fagot fuel,
  His passion strong to move her.

He kneels before the hearth
  Of Time, beyond all seeing.
Each heart-beat of his heart
He breathes into her being.
The small red flames and gold
  He fans, their smoke upfleeing.

In the accomplished time
  Of man's long desolation,
At last her waking sigh
Shall pulse through every nation.
The flames shall soar, and roar her
  Risen o'er all creation!

O'er the red hearth of Time
  Leans the fire-maker,
Men's lives the fagots bound
That serve this fagot breaker,
Justice his flame-born bride,
  Still slumbering till he wake her!

UMBRAE PUELLULARUM

The memories of little maids
Are rosy round this gray old earth.
Heroes its glories, these the shades
Of tender evenings, sunrise mirth.

The blue wild lilacs on the dunes
Nod breeze-blown toward a lustred sea.
The seashore's faint-hummed morning tunes
Sing little maidens, young and free.

The sun-blaze on the shifting blue
Shimmers a phantom down the sands
Where Phoenix' daughter strays anew
Trailing arbutus in her hands;

Yet not as 'neath those cliffs whereunder
Her children playmates shrank and cried
When, bellowing o'er the breakers' thunder,
The white bull threshed the rushing tide.

Dawn on such heights as Tabor's mountain
Shows a child Deborah glad and free;
Rainbows on every sobbing fountain,
A tearless bright Callirrhoë.

I seek not one as Night's sad daughter,
Nor one in Sisera's camp on high
When sunset flames with swords of slaughter
And bannered armies mass the sky.

Only as little maidens, gaily
At play by wood and waterfall,
Hillside and sea, I dream them daily
And hear their happy voices call.

Their songs rejoice when morn rejoices.
They murmur home through evening's shades:
The cherished ghosts of children's voices,
The memories of little maids!

NIGHT WATCHERS

"How goes the night, Faun?" Lo, the woodland crier's eyes
Piercing through the velvet dark with answer like a jest:
"Hours three to bright dawn! Still the white owl flies
Blundering where the rabbits hide, cruel on his quest."
Then the running hoofs that spurn
Clinging vine and heavy fern.
Dryads stir in rich, rare dreaming, with the sorrow-dreaming trees.
"Remember, remember the golden-prowed embarkments, the old Grecian glory,
the ships that ploughed their seas!"

"How goes the night, Faun?" Feet that pause and breath that shakes—
Rustle in the covert as he gasps to ease his side.
"Hours twain to bright dawn! Only now the snail wakes,
Trailing phosphorescence down the leaf-track he must glide."
Then his running hoofs that take
Crackling hurdle of the brake.
Dryads sigh with tender dreamings, as the tall trees sigh with years.
"Remember, remember the slow, enchanted dawning, the white and vestal altar,
and olden lovers' tears!"

"How goes the night, Faun?" Dim he halts beyond the copse.
A glimmer of horn tips. A face but half descried.
"Hours one to bright dawn! Wane the stars. The sun drops
Cloak and mantle from him, and o'er mountains comes his stride."
Then his weary hoofs that fade
With light patter down the glade.
Dryads blush to secret waking as the trees emerge from night.
"But, mortal, remember, we weave you spells by starshine to break your heart
at dawn-time, and vanish with the light!

THE HOUSE OF THE FALSE PROPHET

How strange! No light within the darkened room
No lamp to shed his hinted light, and spill
A flickering welcome on this icy sill
Where my hands rest, reaching from out the gloom?
None! All I see is shadowy as a tomb.
The glass against my forehead strikes a chill
Straight through my brain. The window glimmers still
As cold as steel, as obdurate as doom.

Ah, outer gardens of my prophet's mind,
What words ye flowered! 'Twas there I plucked such healing
Closelier I circled round his soul, to find
Its radiant inmost home; this night came stealing
Before his spirit's house,—and know it—blind!—
Blind of all light, empty and unrevealing!

THE WINNING OF POMONA

I.

Over the island of enchantment came
A summer breeze that morning breathing myrtle
And musk, and noonday steeped the hills in sun.
The hillside orchards glowed. Most glowed that one
The warm, delicious wood-nymph made to flame
With lustrous fruits, where every plot was fertile.

A stirring in the pleasant wood was heard.
The bees about Sylvanus teased. His robe,
An undressed doe's-pelt, lay about his knees.
Low overhead a yellow-breasted bird
Pecked grapes, split, spilt each bursting purple globe,
And chirruped to the foliage-rustling trees.

It was a day of golden distances,
Of floating echoes, of vague sweet alarms.
The wanderer felt a hush of startled laughter,
Passing some covert; and the hint ran after,
Twitching his heart, that in pooled silences
Flushed dryads bathed, and dried, and sunned their charms.

The sea lay dreaming round that pleasant isle,
Holding it to her bosom's rise and fall,
Her treasure-coffer for all heaven to bless;
As some enchanted lady, fixed of smile,
Blue slopes of mountains for her couch's pall,
Fingers a casket of mysteriousness.

Vineyards and orchards, all imperial-stained,
Spread over open hillsides; greenwood clomb
Most darkly green about them and above.
From tawny sands, rock-prisoned, surfy-maned,
Lifted the land's low contours 'gainst a dome
Of royal blue, bound in the arms of love.

Midway the central mount, hung, marble-walled,
Pomona's intimate close; her fruits and grains
Such as nor Greece, Phoenicia, Araby
Nor Palestine might boast. Thrice-fortunate she!
A virgin, as by Artemis enthralled
To minister pale flames in paler fanes.

Slant eyes had peered, slit ears pricked o'er the cope
That guarded her, shagged goat-thighs clung and climbed
The boles without, to spy upon her there
Binding weak shoots, trending each sapling's slope,
Pruning (that infant satyrs pantomimed),
Musing, most busied, lilting unaware.

For many had wooed her.
Love for her loveliness
Drew them bliss-tortured
Here to her orchard.
Woodlands pursued her.
Leafage and grasses
Fluttered, "She passes!"
Pan and all Cyprus
Knelt when they viewed her.

For her lips' blossom,
Ease of her bosom,
Clasp of her bloom,
Fauns wandered madly,
Satyrs piped sadly.
Laughing and lissom
Wandered she gladly;
Sunshine and burgeoning,
Subtle perfume!

Oh, her dear laughter,
Tender—imperious!
Oh, her sweet, serious
Moods flowing after!
Little unnoted
Curls of her tresses
Drew their devoted
Hearts to their lips.
Oh, her kind, careful
Duties despairful!
The birds jewel-throated
She sang to eclipse!

Ripe-graped, red-appled,
Yellowly dappled
Of spilth from the sun
Lay the green clover
Her blithe feet passed over.
Here in the orchard,
Dryadly nurtured,
Fleet would she run;
Tenderly bend her,
Lightly ascend her
For ripenings begun.
Oh, how those peering
Pined for her nearing!
Loving nor fearing,
Still knew she none.

II.

Noon-day swooned to afternoon.
Open vested,
Rosy breasted,
Still Pomona toiled to prune,
Dress and tend her vines and trees.

Stealthy stepped the shadows overt.
Dear desire
Quick with fire
Pierced Vertumnus in the covert,
Fanned him like a desert breeze.

Oft with hay-band, goad, or ladder,
Rôle-assuming,—
To that blooming
Close, that bloomed no lovelier, gladder
Fruit or flower than was she,—

Passed as husbander or reaper,
Had he entered,
Passion centered
Not on trellis, weed, or creeper,
But his heart's divinity!

Summer saddened. Life shrunk withered.
Sung nor bloomed the silence round him.
Would she stoop if thus she found him?
Lift him to her love clear-ethered?

Strong and young and piteous-proudly
Rose he for a last disguising,
One last cast for love's surprising!
Yet despair knelled long and loudly.

Afternoon was dusking there.
Orioles
From sprays and boles
Lyricked to the blushing air.
Red and orange burned the boughs

Laden with their clustered fruit.
Flushed and spent,
In drowsed content
Heard Pomona that low suit
Of the crone before her house!

Oped she to the hobbling one.
Tapping staff
And croaking laugh
Entered. And the deed was done!
Ancient and gray-haired disguise

Bent Vertumnus' youth and grace.
"List, my dear.
A tale to hear!"
Yet he dares not raise his face!
Yet he dares not meet her eyes!

"You, they say, have scorned to favor
Many a wistful woodland lover!"
Thrushes trilled their last above her.
Now must Artemis stoop to save her!

"One before them all is truest.
He is trueness' self however!
Nay, I fable my endeavor!
Dream awhile, oh eyes the bluest!"

III.

"It is a tale of Teucer's time.
There lived a lovely lady then
Who grew unto her lovely prime
Not unbesought of noble men.

"Iphis, a humble reaper, fell
Before her civil looks and sweet.
His heart went lashed 'twixt Heaven and Hell.
Thus Iphis loved Anaxarete!

"She, like the steel of pruning-hooks,
Was pure and bright, was keen and cold,
And went untroubled by the looks
That many gave her, shamed or bold.

"He sued her nurse. He hung with fears
Door-garlands at her portal barred.
He wrote on tablets bright with tears
His pleas for her supreme regard.

"She mocked him from her turret stark.
She laughed with laughter cold and sweet,
With eyebrows lifted in remark,
The cruel-chaste Anaxarete!

"She called her maids to mock with her.
She haughtied by him in the street.
Her heart, nor fire nor flood might stir.
Had you a heart, Anaxarete?

"To the gate-post with garlands graced
He noosed a rope, his head within:
'Here lives the chastest of the chaste.
To love her she mistook for sin!'

" 'Here then you conquer!' forth he flung.
'But I had crawled to kiss your feet!
Here is the final garland hung.
Have joy of it, Anaxarete!'

. . . . . .

"Down mournful streets the funeral passed,
The bier borne on by shuffling men.
Unsmiling, from her tower, at last
She looked—and flinched—and looked again.

"The dead face had a bitter smile.
Her maidens held her from the street.
She looked—and flinched—and looked the while.
Look well again, Anaxarete!

"Her heart within her turned to ice.
(Only a little change was meet!)
Her blood was frozen in a trice.
She stood of stone—Anaxarete!

"Still in the porch at Salamis
All men may see her calm endure,
As fair as one I wot of is,
A marble statue, chill and pure.

"Passion is base and Love 's a fool
Who pipes to fancies fond as fleet.
It is most stately to be cool.
And cool you are, Anaxarete!

"But oh, with dawning to leap up,
To share the sunset beat for beat,
To drain gray twilight's crystal cup!
Too cool you are, Anaxarete!

"Comrade to them is only Love,
A film of sense, a golden heat!
Are these things now discernèd of
Your perfect calm, Anaxarete?"

His voice died like a silver river dying
In drifted sands. Her heart had wisdom then.
Pomona chilled, and warmed, and chilled, replying
To this one man of men.

And to the lovely lifting of her eyes
That listened, to her mounting trouble's flame
That burned her brows, dropping his gray disguise
Vertumnus spoke her name.

He stood like alabaster and like fire
Upheld before her, for the sunset-light
Lay round them, and the stars shone like a tiar
On the cool brows of night.

The trees would darken, and the sunset's river
Shrink to the sources whence its glory came.
But would he stand before her eyes forever,
Her lover, crowned with flame.

"Eros!" she cried, facing the splendid heaven,
This is the hour for which my life was made!
His arms hold body, soul,—my orchards even!
And I am not afraid!

THE LOOSED DRYAD

From the bole of the oak tree I start! There he bound me—
The wizard of summer. With the dim woods around me,
From covert to covert fare my feet, bronzely glancing
To the sway and the swing and the lure of my dancing!

How the watching eyes gleam, for the wood-folk awaken!
Now each creeper and vine stem and root weft is shaken
With the mystery of night and the wakened wings starting,
With the fever of meeting, with the sorrow of parting!

From the wood to the hill, from the hill to the meadow,
Through the moonlight we gleam, now in sight, now in shadow;
And our veins run their will and our hearts sing it over—
Velvet night and the stars and the whispering clover!

From the hill to the wood, silent flicker, hushed laughter!
Ah, the surge of the dance and the brown hair blown after!
Now faster, now faster, now higher and higher
Flit the feet, beat the pulses, with autumn afire!

To the bole of the oak. . . . Ah, belovèd, unbind me!
I am lost in the tree where no sunrise may find me.
Fades the night to its light, sinks the passion to weeping.
Sunrise kindles the east, and the woodland is sleeping!

THWARTED UTTERANCE

Why should my clumsy speech so fall astray,
To uncouth jargon of the every-day
Turn each fit word and phrase
I treasured for your praise?

Discoveries I won to from afar,
All the rare things you are—nor know you are,—
In Orient offering
I haste to you to bring.

I think to kneel and spread on cloths of dream
The beautiful, the priceless things you seem;
Perfume and precious stone,
That you be shown your own.

Prince of my vision-palace, I would call
Your name through trumpets down its central hall,
And the rapt choral praise
Before your daïs raise;

And you should see, should hear, be glad, and smile
That I so love you. Ah, but all the while
I may not show nor teach
Save through my paupered speech!

Beggar in guise, who am so rich at heart
Where you have set your pure white shrine apart
And keep your cherished state
Dear and immaculate,

How should you know or hear me, when my tongue
Turns a dull rebel and doth ready wrong
To thoughts my dreams repeat?—
Perhaps too proud, too sweet!

EMERGENCY

I 've born it out. There was n't much to bear
By your own tenets, but there was for me—
A flaming onslaught, cohorts furiously
Charging the ramparts, fearful thunders booming,
Lightning and holocaust, and Terror looming
With black war-towers on the skyline there!

You saw not even a gnat to make one wince
While your own buoyant thoughts beat up the blue.
Let me be glad of that. The happier you!
I found myself alone to face disaster
Through age-long seconds. While your pulse beat faster
For mirth, my own—stopped dead, a moment since.

Then, at my elbow—and whole worlds away—
You turned, and I was snatching at my breath
After a sudden bout with worse than death,
With worse than beasts of Ephesus, uprisen
One moment from my heart that is their prison.
I bore it out. That 's all there is to say.

They flash unwarning on our dozing acts,
The angel or the fiend. It seems to me
There 's nothing too sublime for Man to be,
In such clear moments,—naught too foully crawling!
What "self" is most our own, when this appalling
Apocalypse lights up the inmost facts?

Something is changed, even though one drops back
In the next instant to the old routine,
Forgets the risk, and is, as he has been,
The slowly-trailing, patient slug of Time,
Neither contemptible nor yet sublime,
Inching with pain along the beaten track.

Something is changed! The mind paints heavens and hells.
And I, their dizzy colors in my brain,
Wonder just what is "sane" and what "insane,"
And what one can be sure of—where we 're master
Of our own triumphs or our own disaster.
But that 's enough. Let 's talk of something else!

SCAMPS OF ROMANCE

I.

We 're off across the hills today with merriment agog,
With pipe and timbrel ribboned gay, with fiddle-scrape and clog.
Then, Nolly Goldsmith, here 's to thee! Send Villon's soul no ill!
But all hail that Prince of Vagabonds, Sir John Maundeville!

Oh, Sir John Maundeville, Sir John Maundeville,
Saw more Golcondas in the west than e'er another will!
Brave Marco Polo pales to naught, Aladdin's boast is still,
Before the gallant glory of Sir John Maundeville!

So we march—tramp! tramp!—and the ringing of our tread
Hales forth the highway swaggerers of lusty times long dead.
When so the glad world's purple clad, it 's hail the romance scamp,
With the zesting of our jesting, and our march—tramp! tramp!

II.

There 's Spindleshanks and Bonfire-head and trolling Heneree,
And each as mad a braggart bred as any age may see.
There 's castles in each wind-piled cloud and Spain just o'er the hill;
And, for best of all romancers, there 's Sir John Maundeville!

Oh, Sir John Maundeville, Sir John Maundeville!
Æneas Sylvius, go up, and, Hakluyt, rest you still;
Cathay, Damascus, Lamary, and Persia shall fulfil
The magic of the legends of Sir John Maundeville!

III.

Come, hydra of the Lernean slough! Promethean vulture, come!
The charms that we have learned for you shall strike your terrors dumb.
The ghost of Raleigh gapes askance; he takes our mirth so ill.
And Pliny louts his bonnet to Sir John Maundeville!

Oh, Sir John Maundeville, Sir John Maundeville!
Of Noah's Ark and Hills o' Gold he 'll spin you yarns until
The Chan of rich Cathay 's your slave, and Caffolos is shrill
Singing the lofty praises of Sir John Maundeville!

IV.

We know the wild chimæric herds—Aspis, Leviathan,
And all the fabled beasts and birds were since the world began.
The Solan Geese flop from their trees; yon crawls the Cuckodrill—
And all because we read about Sir John Maundeville!

Oh, Sir John Maundeville, Sir John Maundeville,
From Malabar to Tartary they marvel at you still.
Old Aldrovandus drops a tear in envy fit to kill
Because we sing the praises of Sir John Maundeville.

V.

We 're off across the hills today with merriment agog,
With pipe and timbrel ribboned gay, with fiddle-scrape and clog.
And in our pack we 'll bring you back (I' faith, we swear we will!)
Mad tales and lays your ghost shall praise, Sir John Maundeville.

Oh, Sir John Maundeville, Sir John Maundeville,
The world that gaped at romance then shall gape at romance still.
There 's portents in each autumn leaf,—Vale Parlous o'er the hill,—
And our jolly dreamland captain is Sir John Maundeville!

So we march—tramp! tramp! Do you wonder that our tread
Stamps up the ghosts of gallant knights from dust of days long dead?
When so the glad world 's romance-clad, it 's hail the romance scamp,
With old glories on our stories, and our march—tramp! tramp!

AFTER-SIGHT

The room is vibrant with you—but they say
That you have left our day,
That even now your frail, thin hands can hold
All power, as in a bowl of heavenly gold,
All wisdom and all beauty in the same,
And quaff your fill in the eternal name
Of death. Yet, have you left us? You are here
In this small room, most dear!

I do not have to question book or chair,
Table or picture. Here you are, and there,—
The undeniable presence! or 'twould seem
I tread a chamber in the house of dream.
Where is your voice, your touch? And yet they are
Both here—not far!

A city's day runs by us in the street
Below. The half-barred shutters filter sweet
And shaken sunlight on the flowers you love.
I may not move
Beneath this silence—while many a clanging bell,
Street cries, harsh traffic's roar, to blatant babel swell.

Oh, grace
Unguessed! Oh, now unveiled and lovelier face!
This empty room is how aware of you!
Though they may call you lost—though She has passed—
At last—at last
This is the soul I loved, and never knew!

LILIA'S TRESS

It failed, past misty distances,
That last ripe note! He gained the close
And found the bird-soft little tress
Thorned on a dreaming rose.

"Then take my heart, oh amorous eyes,
But wonder not that swift I follow!"
A wing whirred past him to the skies
As dawn waked thrush and swallow.

"Oh bird in flight! . . ." The courtyard rang
As, thralled by dream, he stumbled past
The drowsing watch. The great gates clang.
He treads the moor at last.

> So say the little elfin men,
> Beguiling, slowly-smiling men,
> The little leaping, dancing men,
> The slyly necromancing men;
> So say the little elfin men,
> "For dream of Lilia, great distress.
> For clasp of Lilia, heathenesse
> And Lilia's tress . . . no more, no less
> Than Lilia's eerie, faerie tress!"

He held the dream before his eyes
And her sweet language to his breast.
"They lie! The token tracks the prize.
Doth its discovery not attest
That I should follow and be wise?

"Suddenly by my couch I saw
Her stand . . . or was it some dear dream?
So real did the vision seem
I shook 'twixt ecstasy and awe!

"Then peaceful arms of soft delight
One moment clasped me. Eyes of dawn
Drank of my soul. . . . I woke—to night,
To naught but night—and found you gone!

"Mountains are naught for me to scale
Like as I climbed from casement-ledge
And found—this sign you will not fail—
Sweet gage, thorned to the rose's edge!

"I follow! Be it night or morn
I know not—but I track my prize!"
All for a tress the fairies mourn,
All for two deep, unmortal eyes!

All for a tress the fairies claim,
Dogging the dreamer o'er the rim
Of wastes where sound without a name
Draws him through echoes of laughter dim:

"Mate with your princess, crown her queen!
Lilia, once by mortal men
Hotly wooed and scorned, again
Comes to harry chastest men,
Break a heart as hers broke then,
Giving ecstatic arms and lips
To insure hope's dark eclipse,
To insure all joy's eclipse!
Hate for your Princess—dule and teen!"

The days and nights were not. His brain
Whirled onward 'round one dim refrain,
"Will you not love me?" What now were
Earth, Heaven, Hell, withouten her?
Earth, Heaven, Hell but deserts bare
Of one vast, voiceless, blank despair!
Oh, blessèd lightnings! Sheol rare!

Chuckle the little elfin men,
Deriding, woe-betiding men,
The little finger-nosing men,
The prophecy-unclosing men!
Thus mock the little elfin men,
"For dream of Lilia, great distress.
For clasp of Lilia, desp'rateness.
Give us the tress—we crave no less!
Ah, fool! beguiled by Lilia's tress."

And so at last the world's edge came
Upon him like a sword of flame.
Far down the cloud-abyss below
Cold, mocking laughter seemed to go.
He saw white arms, a laughing eye,
Two rose-leaf lips all pursed awry
In an ill-willing, chilling cry.
She vanished. . . . and he could not die!

He cast the tress—took paces three—
And saw it vanish utterly.

Still do they point the blasted tree,
That fallen oak upon the lea,
That he uprooted frenziedly.
And they will show the rocks he brake,
The fissures that his heels did make,
The stones he crumbled, flake by flake.

That morning by the lapping moat
They found him mumbling things by rote.
He flew at his betrothèd's throat.

So say the little elfin men,
Beguiling, slowly-smiling men,
The little leaping, dancing men,
The slyly necromancing men;
So say the little elfin men,
"For dream of Lilia, great distress.
For clasp of Lilia, heathenesse.
For Lilia's tress—Hell-fire, we guess!
A fearsome, weirdsome, faërie tress!"

THE BRAWL

Rapiers, clash over the wine cups!
(Guard, gallants merry!)
Fling the flincher to bait where the swine sups!
(Ward, gallants merry!)
Here in the house of fray flickers good steel.
Room for the rapier's way, elbow and heel!
Drunken night pales from day, doomward to reel,
(Huzza! Thrust and parry!)

Watch where the windows grow lighter!
Candle-light shrinks on the tables.
Dawn lays her chill on the fighter.
Ho! Our steeds stamp in the stables.
(Thrust, gallants merry!)
Wine stains or blood stains are ruddy.
Whip over guard to the heart!
Wrists, all so supple and bloody,
Play a brave part!

Harry it home in the tierce!
(Hasten and harry!)
Serpents our swords are, to pierce.
(Close, gallants merry!)
Crouch—ward—a brave clash of steels.
Look you, he topples—he reels!
Death beats tattoo with his heels!
(Huzza! Thrust and parry!)

THE HALCYON BIRDS

I.

It was a city rare,
A stately, stainless city:
Trachinae, known of old
By soft-voiced folk and kind.
Poets, that build of air
And cloud high realms of joy and pity,
Ne'er may your eyes behold
Such streets as those did climb and wind
Up through the golden haze
That hung about that city's towers
And misted all its days
To dreams but rich-eyed flowers may know
That nod in fullest noon
With vision's heavy swoon.
This was the great gods' fateful boon
To Cyix long ago!

"There is a mountain fastness
Where dwelleth one but half a god.
He broods within a valley
No winged espial finds.
Lone in its desert vastness
All day he broods with weary nod,
Till sunset brings a sally
Therein of rushing, roaring winds.

"They stoop to him in full career,
And soar with new abandon.
They cry within his deafened ear,
And round him flaunt their ways.
Then godlike forms they take,
While all the echoing mountains shake
As Jove had laid his hand on
Their buttressed heights for praise.

"He binds them to his nod,
That ancient, daylong sleeper.
Aye, though but half a god,
Aeolus, the assigned
By Jove to be for ay
The four winds' faithful keeper,
Calms them at close of day
To hush, before his master mind."

Thus spake Halcyone
One noon within the garden
Of white Trachinae's palace
Above the glimmering sea;

For Cyix' bride was she,
And daughter of the warden
Of winds, whose love or scorn or malice,
Bound them or loosed tumultuously.

But Cyix, oh, Cyix, son of Hesper,
What have you heard?
Through the beat of the sea an ancient whisper?
In noon a word?

"Claros claims me now. I have heard my warning.
Love, weep not so!
Fate's priestess calls me by night and morning,
And I must go.

"The portents that brook no light transgression
Crowd round my sleep.
By my couch all night in a grim procession
They pass, and keep

"In the noon-day my heart from your heart withholden
And tasks of state.
Though the days of our love grow long and golden
I may not wait!"

He loosed her hand on the high, bright terrace
And turned away.
In her vision, a storm off the coast of Claros
Drew o'er the bay

As she stood alone. The bright sea darkened.
Swift lightnings played
Through the shriek of the fancied blast. She harkened
And fell afraid.

The ship they fitted with purple sail.
From the ship-house her gleaming length they drew.
"Like a hawk she will drive before the gale!"
Said the shipmen leal and true.
The ship they fitted with flashing oars
And her poop they spread with a carpet fine.
"Like a swan she will ride when the storm-cloud pours!"
Said the rowers thirty and nine.

Trachinae's walls gave cheer on cheer
As the long oars swirled the foam.
All white Trachinae's townsfolk cheer,
But one upon the walls doth hear
The roaring winds of her ancient home,
Like hounds that are loosed on the wild hart's track
Giving tongue in a fierce and howling pack,
Now scudding low with wings that gloom
Broad heaven with portents dire,
Now streaming, rising, spreading doom.
Fierce laughters, lit like fire,
Wrinkle and crackle through their cloud
On the sea, and lightnings, flashing loud,
Whip the wild waves to foam.
Thus heard Halcyone, terror-bowed,
The hissing sneer to the waters cowed,
The whine and snarl round mast and shroud
Of the winds from her father's home.

But lift to sea thine eyes,
Oh, weeping daughter!
Swift the Sea Bird flies
'Mid shouts that spread and rise
Across the water.

And lift to sky thy gaze,
Oh, wife of wailing!
From high azure ways
A glad sun bends at gaze
To speed this sailing.

Then like her heart's last hope it died
From sight against the distant blue,
That far-off sail. The sea lay wide
And calm. Her heart seemed stricken through.
Those vanished oars no longer took
A flickering glint from foam or sky.
White lilies, 'neath the reaper's hook,
Fall as she fell without a cry.

They came and took her sleeping,
And through the palace cool and dim
Carried her to her chamber high.
Toward morn she woke to weeping,
And by her window sobbed for him
Sad prayers to pierce a sadder sky.

II.

Hail the rowers, who lift their proud ship through the languorous surges
As she rides, like a swan with the sunset's red gold on its wings,
Through the streaked, beryl-glimmering
Sea, all one shimmering
Sweep of soft hues to its verges,—
Rides the heave of its bosom, and forth from its blossoming billows triumphantly flings!

How the gleaming backs bend to the rippling light lunge and recover!
And, when sun strikes the length of the deck to illustrious blaze,
Glisten muscle and tendon
That flow as they bend on
Their oars, and the blades glitter over,
And with showering brilliance of spray-dripping dalliance the stroke shuttles home for a space.

And again and again and again—till, like swords to the scabbard
Simultaneous slipped, flash the oar-lengths shipped in at command,
And the sail, its bright breast
Stirred to eagle unrest,
Swells and fills as the hull lists to larboard,
And she dips to the trough of the sunset-filled deep and is lost to all sight of the land!

But hark, the sky-harriers, loosed
On the track of vainglorious ships,
Where through storm-wrack the lightnings are sluiced
Give tongue in eclipse!

And see the dark press of their wings,
As was warned, winnow down from the sky
As in torment the wild ocean flings
Its protest on high!

Hear you voices, oh, Cyix, all blent,
Through this smother of furious foam,
In supreme and assuageless lament
For the shaken Haemonian home?

The furies have found you! They rend
The stout decks with their taloned attack,
And the thick timbers buckle and bend
And the masts double back?

As through Babel the thin voice of Fate
Conquered tumult, now Nemesis finds
Words of woe for who takes for his mate
The Daughter of Winds.

"For Hesper still lightens serene
Life's wild sea for all hearts and all minds;
But dark passion and anguish and threne
Is the love of the winds.

"Choose to leap unrestrained like a flame
To that love that abandon unbinds;
Utter bliss, utter loss with the same,
Is the word of the winds.

"Choose to flash unocculted across
Life's sad tumult, a meteor men cry
For the freest; Love's law of your loss
Makes silent reply.

"Only see, though the hills interlock
And in fury the world rend apart,
That sure love that is lit for a mock
In the sky's quiet heart!

"And the tempests arouse, rock and veer
As Aeolus these loosens or binds,
But the Day-star sheds light down the year
Unstirred of the winds!

"See its flush on each bud that is born
In calm beauty ere hands of the hinds
Pluck them passion-disheveled and torn,
Anguish-stained by the winds.

"Yet apparel the soul may not doff,
Though your whims weave rich robes of all kinds,
Is this calm that we doubt of and scoff!"
Say the travailing winds.

"For there mingled, amerced, fuller-shown
In one light, every hue is Mankind's.
In the light of one star, peace alone!
Know us not!" cry the winds.

Now with that cry in his soul
See, while the deeps draw about,
Thunder and threaten and spout,
And the ship like a spent horse reels,

Foundering deep through the dark,—
Withheld he stands and stark,
Flung to that whelming rout
With no frantic last appeals!

Salt and deep and cold
That breast that heaves in mountainous mirth!
Beryl and black with doom tosses that titan breast!
Oh, glutted maw, as of old
Starved for a teeming Earth,
Devour him deep in gloom
That a warrior heart have a warrior rest!

Deep in the streaming twilight that lightens under the sea,
Silver and coral they veer to him, fish-finned, with breasts of rose;
But his breast heaves full with despair for the home where he fain would be
And his head drips up through the dark ere their wet arms clasp and close.

"Halcyone!" heard the darkness from the hero adrift with death.
"Halcyone!" heard the poising swells ere they broke in a bursting bath
Of darks shot through with the dreams of the drowned, but Cyix recalled his breath,
And again "Halcyone!" heart-rent, soared o'er the sea's white wrath.

Only the Day-star heard it, muffling his stricken face,—
Only that high-held Hesper, pacing his star-dust rounds!
And that night, eclipsed in sorrow, he waned from his ancient place,
And his woe went across the heavens in a shudder of starred profounds!

And down from that rabid night,
Down to a strange sea dawn
Of eerie and flickered light,
Clasped in the arms of his streaming guides
Deep-drowned is Cyix drawn
To rest in the perilous Infinite
Where drift through grotto and samphire lawn
The glimmering undertides.

So "Under the swell," each sea thing sang,
"Clasped to the swell of our lulling breasts,
Cool and deep,
Cool and deep,
Where the curtained deeps in darkness hang
In the soul of an emerald Cyix rests!

"Leander and more in like marvel lie,
For whom our mothering voices called.
Lucent laid,
Lucent laid,
Oh, find them, each green eternity,
Hushed in the soul of an emerald!

"Soulless the deeps that so draw men.
Soulless but long to love are we;
And we give all—
Gladly all—
Nor our love of body and soul dies when
The audit sounds of eternity!"

III.

Now wakes the breeze o'er Thessaly
Where uplands stir and sigh
With summer dawn
When that the fawn
Breaks covert by the pool!
Now stirs the dawn o'er Thessaly;
Break bivouac the stars on high;
Flush up the Eastern sky
Previsionings of rosy rule!

When that the sun is risen—
When that the sun is risen—
Now, now his golden sinews shake the
dark bars of his prison!
Not yet earth's flowers fête their lord,
But multitudinous in accord
Burgeons the east, one glorious hanging bower
Of crocus, rose, and violet in flower!
Thither by mounting values the adored
Climbs clashing to his sway,
Swift sunlight from his girt and golden sword
Raying upon the world stupendous day!

Ah, but the long-watched window, with the dawn
Paling as hopeless as a prison wall
Where one with fear from all the world withdrawn
Clings to that shade, nor notes the east at all
Build up of hues; for ever rise and fall
Within her breast the tides of doubt and dread!
"For if he come at all—oh, if he come at all,
He floats ooze-tangled, drifted chill and dead;
Dank seaweeds be his pall;
Sea jewels only bind the locks of that immortal head."

Nor she descended all that morning through,
Halcyone the peerless, pearl of price,
But, when the afternoon to evening grew,
At last upon the gates of Paradise
Prevailed her soaring prayers, and gentle eyes
Bent Juno on the moaning speech of them,
And Iris, in this wise (Iris of rainbow guise)
She charged, saying, "Fly thou to the farthest hem
Of earth, where vast doth rise
Somnus' dark cave that leagues about doth to rich sleep
condemn!

"From his Cimmerian stupor Somnus rouse
And bid him of his henchmen choose that one
Who best in dream, at the Haemonian house.
May person Cyix to his woebegone
Halcyone! Dispatch!" And so 'tis done.
Violet-veined webs spreads Iris, dropping light
Flushed cirrus clouds upon—fades through, and so is
gone—
A rainbow flicker lost in infinite
Abysms cœrulean:
Then swirls through swimming sunlit wastes her dipping
dartling flight!

IV.

Breathed from the brain of the Sleeper
Here hangs noonday hush it seems.
Lethe murmurs mazeful dreams,
Murmuring, mazing deeper, deeper
Down through shadowy silences.
Clouds upon the mountain's breast
Like sea-birds spent with roving rest.
Meadowed poppies mock the reaper.

Breathed from meads Cimmerian
Clouds and shadows mingle wanly.
Never night, nor dawn,
Ever twilight only
O'er this country bends and blesses.
And the light, as from a lute
Laid aside still music whispers—
Whispers and caresses—
Glimmers musing mute;
Glimmers shaken, overtaken
By its spirit, wishing vespers!

Here a cave hung high
In that cryptic mountain keeping
Ward across the meads of sleeping,
Like a blinded eye
Deep and dark secures
Peace from all allures;
Those whereafter men run weeping,
Wailing, 'neath the smileless, smiling,
Delphic, bluely-wiling sky!

Drowsed and dully angried,
Crimson, gold, in heavy masses
Poppies stain the seamed crevasses
Level with that tunnelled gloom.
Lax, luxuriant in bloom
Droop they rich and languid,
And the Sleeper's breathing passes
Light across them from the largeness
Of his glooming inner room.

From far dusk fell Iris,
Twirling like a butterfly,
From on high
Circling as the eagle's gyre is,—
All the splendid stolen hues
Of her kirtle fluttered loose;
And her bow made glittered quiver,
Flashing like a falling river,
Slim and silvern, sprayed of color!
Where she passed the clouds closed duller
As when dartling hope is lost.
Her approach the clouds uptost
In a surf of spreading blaze.
Swift and shot through prismy haze
Dropped she dripping, stood and sheathed
Wing before that murmurous cave.
As the wave
Breathes before the dawn she breathed.

A little only lingering, she took
Within there paces three;
Felt how the dense dark shook
With heavy curtained mystery;
Then, as her straining eyes grew used, and dim
Huge details compassed, on his high vague bed
Of sprawled Atlantean limb
Ere sight she knew of him:
Somnus the Sleeper! Dreams like flowers shed,
In formless strange transparencies did swim
The valance round, and dusky folds dream-broidered
swathed his head.

A little in that twilight-grown gloom
She stood; then raised her arms.
Like dayspring through the room
Flooded at once in light alarms
The thousand-hued effulgence of her soul.
Thick protest murmured from those swarms apress
Blindly from Day made whole;
And rumbled mutterings roll
From the god canopied of weariness.
He moves, he heaves, his heavy eyes ache with such
light's excess.

At last, "Speak, Goddess, what your errand is,
Only abate this flagellating light!"
He said in words like heavy silences,
Heaving his length upright;
And by him, of one height
Enormous in the dusk that closed on them,
Icelos, Phantasos and Morpheus, dight
In robes rich-shadowed, heavy to the hem
With stuff of dreams—his sons by deep-wombed Night—
Swayed as they stood, like great rich blooms sleep-
weighted from the stem.

The first it is familiars every shape
Of bird, beast, reptile, to the sleeping eye.
Patterned upon his muffling wonder-cape
In shifting phantasy
Of lit or darkling dye,
As gathered is that garb or smoothly hangs,
The mind may mark all preyers that prowl or fly,
Couchant or rampant,—all fierce lives, of fangs
Or claws, and tamed to domesticity
All dumb and restless creature lives fettered to frets and
pangs.

The second into water, tree or hill
Transforms himself. Oh, to such purposes
Of peace would Man might turn himself at will!
What bubble shows be these
To which we bend our knees?
Field, mountain, shore and leaping cataract
Woo to no venerance. Yet majesties—
Awful eternal words to teach the fact—
Are instant from them. Gaze! The hour flees.
Still rains the bridegroom light that lulls low plain and
mountainous tract!

Meet Phantasos by noon, when that the ways
Of men too sternly din, and wounds and galls
Oppress the soul, and through a blood-shot haze
Close in the iron walls
Of Custom. Sudden falls
Death's quiet cool on that Caligulan shame.
Through sweet-souled meads and high tremendous halls
Pine-pillared, their voice the breathing of One name
Move thou where such free, simple faith appalls!
From such unshaken Future gaze—and go the ways of
Fame!

Iris spake then. The Slumberer heard and turned
To Morpheus, the last, who persons Man.
Swaying, he bowed, in all disguises learned,
Shrank like a folded fan,
And, in a second's span,
Stood forth as Cyix. *Ah! But strange was this*
Stark dripping shade of Cyix, ghostly wan!
His beard weed-meshed, the stroke of Nemesis
Plain in his port, and, where the ooze downran
His limbs like ivory glimmering forth, sapped of the sea's
last kiss!

Moved, the bright messenger of Juno gazed,
Doubting, yet unamazed.
Lustre that instant languished from her wings,
And fearful shadowings
Forth from the walls once more, as now she stepped,
Clambered and softly crept.

Pooling the dark with glimmer followed he
His guide that was to be.
Again narcotic darkness filled the cave
Upswelling wave on wave.
Again about that ebon bed in gleams
Swam the transparent dreams.

Breathed from the brain of the Sleeper,
Once more noonday hush it seemed
Clothed that country. Lethe dreamed
Murmuring, mazing deeper, deeper
Down through shadowy silences.
Clouds and shadows mingled wanly.
Twilight—twilight only
Lingered weak with weariness.
Evening bent
From the blurring firmament,
Bent to bless
All that waste of weariness
Where the star-crowned hills stood lonely.

v.

"Dreams, dreams! If you wake it may be,
(Oh, kind dream, blind dream, dream I hope to hold!)
That we fade down the dark through that silent silver sea
On our splendid ship, our wonder-ship, our ship of faërie
With its masts of eerie gold?

"Dreams, dreams! Oh, tell me can it be
(Oh, sweet dream, fleet dream, dream I hope to hold!)
I shall wake to the dawn with the heartache still in me
Nor the barren light, the barren light will bring him back from sea
Save drifted still and cold?"

So o'er Halcyone sleep passed that tossing night,
Drifting pure and bright, drifting great and grim,
Till the dream god stole to her couch at start of light
And stood remote and dim.

Woke she first to the horror? Only this she knew:
Her love, torn from terrors, had triumphed to her there!
Nor now did she note on his brow the deathly dew
Nor his weed-meshed hair.

Her arms reached to him, as lily-like she lay,
And the spirit's voice was like silence to the blind.
"Deep drowned, deep drowned where the tides drift gray
Lies he you hope to find!"

Then swiftly by dream was the tale of terror told.
Groped she sobbing toward her waking as the god made haste to fly.
"Deep drowned! Deep drowned!" through her lifting slumber rolled
As she woke with stricken cry.

Too well, too well,
Oh, Morpheus, molder
Of Fate's disguises
In human form;
Too well, too well
On this sweet beholder
You pressed surprises
Of shock and storm!

Too ill, too ill,
Oh, man-unmaker,
By talking spirits
Of artless art;
Too ill, too ill
Were your spells to wake her,
That she inherits
A broken heart!

Her wail through the chamber rings.
Lights move by porch and stair.
To the breast of her bent old nurse she clings
And sobs like a wood-dove her soft despair.
And the dawn grows up in gray
Through the casement, wide to the sea;
"'Tis down to the sands today, today;
For my love drifts home to me!"

They have striven to hold her there
But she slips to the open door,
Like light drifts down the stair,
Like light is across the entrance floor!

Through the open portico
Drives the keen blue smoke of the sea.
"To the sands—to the sands—for this day I know
That my love drifts home to me!"

And at last, in the drenching, stinging
Wet breath of an ocean dawn,
On the sands they heard her singing,
That huddled folk on the palace lawn;
Her hair like a mænad's blown
To the wind as the east grew light
And her arms o'er her head in a fury thrown
And stretched to the Infinite.

And now as the east was builded
Shade on shade to surprising hue;
As the sun's ascendance gilded
Flushed turrets where windy banners blew;
A speck on the sea-line only,
A fleck on the gray sea-blur,
Weed-palled and supreme and lonely
Her love drifted home to her!

. . . . . .

Out of the night and the weeping,
Out of the deep vast dark,
Back from abysses keeping
Their secrets stern and stark,
Into the glorious morning
Sent from his sepulchre,
In splendid and solemn warning
Her love drifted home to her!

Oh, dream more divine and thrilling
Than the sky's full radiance then
When love to supreme love's willing
Returned from the graves of men!
Oh, triumphant human sorrow
Resurrecting what fates inter!
For a light to mankind's tomorrow
Her love drifted home to her.

Then surges shimmered before him
And waves were a way for him.
The sky bent low to adore him.
The sea-line's light grew dim.
And there on a shoal outstanding
Beat round by the laughing sea,
Those immortal deeps commanding,
She waited—Halcyone!

Pale and proud and stricken
In through the blue he came;
And, feeling her pulses quicken,
On her lips her lover's name,
Swift from the shoal, and spurning
Its sand, all her being stirred,
She leapt *in anguish turning*
To a skimming and crying bird!

To his breast! And they rose together
Miraculous and bright,
Up through the fierce blue weather
Wing to wing in their flight,
Their golden, golden crying
Athrob with their pinions' surge,
Glorying, waning, and dying
O'er the shaken sea's dim verge!

Oh, light that no night hath taken
From the wailing and crying sea!
Oh, miraculous anthem shaken
From a heaven of harmony!
Still that light from heaven is pouring
Beyond speech or the reach of words
As it blazed round their stricken soaring—
The joy of the Halcyon Birds!

For a period sent of heaven
Aeolus the surges binds
With halcyon days and seven
Untroubled of waves or winds.
Then softly that high-held Hesper,
With the sea dawn raying low
Tells in a starlight whisper
This tale of the long ago.

Then her sweet wild name goes thrilling
With its woe o'er the glimmered sea,
And the soul of the deep swells filling
With its wonder—*Halcyone!*
And ray on effulgent ray, star
On star, with a blaze that blinds,
Chants the song of the son of the Day-star
And the daughter of the winds!

THE ROUNDHOUSE

Rembrandt alone could paint this mammoth shed
Filled with weird hissing like some hydra's lair,
Where thick smoke eddies through the sunless air
And webs of steel curve upward overhead.
These floors run burning oils. These fires are fed
From pits of Tartarus. Against the glare
High-shouldered, coal-black gryphons crouch and stare.
Their heavy panting wakes a sense of dread.

Yet stranger far, the human ants in hordes
Who swarm like imps in some infernal masque,
Seeming to guide each awful shape of power
As th' elemental spirits' potent lords,—
Yet only toiling at their common task,
Bound by a schedule to the clamoring hour!

THE CENTAUR'S FAREWELL

For they found Chiron, their ancient tutor, standing stiffly before his cave, when that they had forded Anaurus and come to that clearing beneath the face of Pelion above the thymy downs. Then they spake of Pelias and the launching at Pegasæ. And there was tossing of war-bonnets, shouts and laughter and weeping. The boy Achilles brought them wine with eyes of wonder. And his father kissed him and bade him be of cheer. Then they knelt when that the ancient centaur raised his hands. And they departed to their ship, but the boy and the ancient stood upon the headland to watch them out to sea.

"They are passed from the feast that my hands might have spread, from the boughs that mine arms might have laid,
In the days when I taught them, Achilles,—so young, oh, youth of my heart!
Past Athos to face, beyond Samothrace, the Hellespont mantling dismayed
With gales, ere the Euxine, thick-darkened with storm, looms black where the cliffs draw apart!
They are passed from the hoofs that defended their raids, from the eyes that were watch o'er their sleep,
From the harp that rang battle, the lips that made wise young athletes to wrestle and leap,—
They are passed from their teacher, their father, their friend,—and the old way for heroes is steep;
Aye, steep as the climb past Anaurus, with torrents as cruel athwart!

"Look south on the little walled towns of the world where Hæmonia shines in the sun!
Look north to Olympus and Ossa, Achilles, child of the light!
For these were the lowlands they rambled with laughter, the heights where the hunt used to run
With insolent twanging of bow-strings,—the stag tracked forth from the thickets of night.
Æneus and Actæon, Jason the Healer, wild Heracles shouting aloud,
Asclepius twining an arm with his serpents, and Peleus graceful and proud,
The golden-souled Orpheus lithe at the race, with his strange voice and harp for the crowd,—
Ah, once they returned with the nightfall where red flamed their welcome and bright!

"My children go forth to the gods of their sires to serve and to conquer and sin.
Once—they were young, Achilles,—as young as thou art, and as glad.
And I, who am wise with old judgments and gods and the trophies it boots not to win,
Misshapen, uncouth, feel the sorrows of ages on heavy-bowed shoulders and sad.
The Kronian dead are my watchers by night and my shadowy comrades by day;
And Iapetus sired and Clymene bore him a race that were mightier than they.
The Golden, the Silvern, the Brazen, the Heroes, the Iron,—and then pass away
The races of man, like the foam-front sucked back from the sands it hath had!

"I wait for the wars that shall be, though the heavens grow pale with the din
of our wars.
The Phicean hill knows a portent and Laius is slain in his blood.
One sins at the couch of Jocasta, and raises his sick, sightless face to the stars.
Assault is on Thebes, and the Brothers are ashes where towers have trembled
and stood.
Nay, thou—even thou, sturdy lad of the quiver—I mark thee on alien shores.
That arm hurls its spear by encrimsoned Scamander. They fall in their
streets, at their doors,
Bright warriors in harness,—for shame is on Ilium, and ravage and red battle
roars
Ere Glaucos call forth his sea-horses to trample their prows in the flood.

"—And the past? I have looked on the perfect Cyrene the sun-god once called
me to see,
She that bore the nymphs' bane, Aristeaus, the boy and the keeper of bees;
And that spouse at whose wedding the evil Eurytion made 't shameful such
centaurs should be.
I have known Teiresias—Melampus—as wise as the gods of all ranks and de-
grees.
My fate at Malea the future unveils, and my death by—the flower of my sons.
Ah, Pholos, that wine that the Mightiest unseals flows red as my ebbing life
runs! . . .
*Nay, child of my heart, turn thine eyes down to Iolcus, and mark the delectable
ones*
*Half-glimpsed through the trailing arbutus and dark and thick-clambering
trees!*

"*Haunt, haunt, oh, Napaeae, the eyes of him ever, that ever he rest by my side!*
*Nymphs of Pelion, blind him and bind him! The sun is gone low in the
west!*
*They are passed, the brave pupils that Chiron held dearly, the young gods that
spake to his pride.*
*All are passed; this the last, whose eyes follow the Argo afar on the perilous
quest! . . .*
Cold, cold is the cave, and the ashes are scattered of nights that were feasting
and rhyme.
Ah, Orpheus, my Orpheus, haled over Strymon to days of long-suffering and
crime,
The leaves are fall'n fast on the days that were marjoram—marjoram, myrtle
and thyme!
My sleep shall bring dreams that are barren, and midnight wail out on my
rest!

THE FLOWER GIRL

(Reign of Queen Anne)

Chimney-pot to chimney-pot who is it creeps,
Whisking on the slates of the roof above my bed?
Black cats, rusty bats, little inky sweeps
Dusting with their besoms the tiles overhead?
Whimper, whimper, wind down the fire-grate flue!
Rattle, little window! What shall I do?
Nicolo Night-cap, say, is it you?

I 'll draw up my coverlid, red and blue and green,
Tufted and flowered and patchwork-made.
How the mad yellow moonlight dances on the screen
And fills my little closet, and makes me afraid!
The cobwebs wink up there in the corner by the flue,
And the bedstead shakes, and the fire burns blue!
Nicolo Night-cap, what shall I do?

Right up next the sky they 've tucked me away,
For the pennies come few in the long street-hours.
The sparrows look in when the sun shouts, "Day!"
Men wake to their work and I to sell them flowers,
With my panniers and my kerchief and my smile—but whiles
'Tis gray and drizzly weather for the best of smiles!

Hist! I 'll tell you of Nicolo! He 's spry as a rat.
He 's a peeping, squeaking brownie, and a chimney elf.
And—he wears a cotton night-cap instead of a hat,
And—he dances on the roof-tops and whispers to himself.
He 'll slide down the rain-spout and peep right through
My little yellow window. Then what shall I do?
Nicolo Night-cap, *say, is it you?*

One night I dreamed of farthings, and—pop!—like that,
He stood by my bed and whisked me up the wall.
And we danced down the roof-tops that lie so far and flat
Up there next the moon, where there 's nothing else at all.
And he whispered down the stars for hours and hours,
Till they overflowed my apron like a lapful of flowers.

They ruffled soft and blue and flowery-red and green.
I held both arms, and they heaped my apron high.
I sold them on the Strand to the ladies of the Queen,
Billowy dames, pompous peers, and the beaux that pass me by.
But the squeaking, tweaking brownies on the roof overhead
Were hard on my heels when I tumbled back to bed!

Chimney-pot to chimney-pot, hear the brownie creep!
Nicolo Night-cap, my mind 's all awhirl!
The little yellow window just begs him to peep.
Who 'll help or who 'll comfort a small flower-girl?
Whimper, whimper, wind down the fire-grate flue!
Rattle, little window! What shall I do?
Nicolo Night-cap, *say, is it you?*

WHAT SAID THE LITTLE ADMIRAL?

"Says he, 'I 'll get my full Gazette this day, or there will be
A tablet in Westminster and a burial at sea!
England's old-woman Ministry, knit on, knit on, I say!
You made us cowards at Corsica, you doubted Jervis' fleet,
You snarled at me when I would me at Alexandriay. . . .
Now, "Nap" 's here, boys! A cheer!' . . . And the drums began to beat.

"Says he, 'You grutched my blinded eye and blinked my empty sleeve;
Well, Lord Hood has seen my sailor-men at Bastia, by your leave.
My men were ghosts at Calvi under the lion-sun.
The Austrians smirked and blenched and shirked, but I cut the Dons in two
The 'tother side Gibraltar,—and you know how that was done!
But it 's made you afraid of me, rear admiral of the Blue.

" 'You want my explanations for "chasing round the sea?"
You 'll want no explanations tonight, for there will be
The grandest, brightest bonfire of Crapaud's shrouds and spars
That ever lighted London with loud huzzas and hearty!
Officers, sup,—and then we 'll up, and show how Nelson wars.
Langridge-grog for the Frog, red-hot grog for Boneyparty!'

"Says he, 'I 'll get my own Gazette!' He got it on that night.
We saw him, in the cockpit, come reeling from the fight
All blind with blood, but,—'Serve my men, surgeon! I 'll bide my turn.' . . .
And a 'king' like that don't die, for when disaster rent the wave
We heard him from the quarter-deck, as the 'Orient' roared astern,
'Man the boats, while there floats a foe of ours to save!'

"And he so keen that the Culloden should get her rightful praise!
Well, he had an eye for all of us; as, on that day of days,
He knew where Trowbridge was, and how his shoaling saved the night.
God rest the little Admiral, and such as he, I say,
With a heart for every Jack afloat, and a stomach for a fight,
And his fame in the name of the fight off Afrikay!

THE HAPPY FOOL

I would not be a dogmatist,
Banging a heavy, hairy fist
To crack the pint-pots on the table.
But I would dream as I am able
And noose God's wonders in a twist
Of quaintest thought and rippled rhyme;
By happy turns of fortunate phrase
Would capture Faith, and teach stern Time
To mend his ways.

I have heard out the burning boys,
And now they tire me with their noise.
Where there 's intense belief, why scoff it?
But rare 's the code and rare 's the prophet

With the sincere, authentic voice;
And all may rattle iron-ware
Or fling a torch, Salmoneus-like,
Crying "It thunders—lightens!" ere
Real lightnings strike.

They premise and they start to "prove";
And then you 're in another groove
As narrow as the one disputed.
Another moiety fitly suited,—
But all the world?—all men approve
The self-same set of able rules?
I 've yet to see them. So, for me,
Dreams and vast wonderment; a fool's
Wisdom, maybe!

A PASSAGE TO ITALY

"On board ship the same night he wrote the sonnet."
—*Colvin's Life.*

The Channel glitters underneath the moon!
Severn and I shall be at Naples soon;
At Naples soon enough, and then at Rome.
Brown has my letter now—if Brown 's at home.
I thought at Gravesend surely. . . . Good old Brown,
Rare 'mid the Lakes—how kind in London-town!
Thank God for Wentworth Place!

Oh, curse this croup,
I might be infant at the Swan and Hoop
Once more, by the infernal way I cough!
Bull-pup John Keats, a pretty taking-off!
Confound this throat! That Scottish travelling. . . .
And never even learned the Highland fling;
Only, at Dumfries, (How one lives and learns!)
Wrote a bad sonnet—very bad!—on Burns.

Urr-r-r-r! Well, it 's easier now. Gods, what a night!
How goes it? "Great ring of pure and endless light
All calm as it was bright."
Good words, good Vaughan. Who quoted him? Did Lamb
Or Wordsworth? Wordsworth! Why, the man 's a clam!
"A pretty piece of paganism."—damn!
I wish him chivvied by bacchanals laying fear on
A second Pentheus of Mount Citheron. . . .
Yet no . . . I 'll save him from my utter scorn
Because of "Triton and his wreathèd horn."

Oh, well, let me forget—let me forget,
Or else I may remember Lockhart yet,
Old Lockhart-mock-heart,—yes, or Mr. Abbey,
The dragon of our gold—*the miauling tabby!*
Ah, Fanny . . . Fanny? At the name I 'm gone.
And yet all names lead back to . . . Fool and pawn,
Miserable!

"An idle, loafing felley."
That 's you, John Keats. And there is Percy Shelley
To play my host at Pisa, if I would.
I won't. Although I 'm sure he 's very good.

Well, well, God save Apothecaries Hall!
Suppose I 'd turned the surgeon, after all,—
Suppose away "Endymion," call me wise,
And carol "One more surgeon made at Guy's!
He never read with Clarke at Clerkenwell.
Leigh Hunt's 'Examiner' will never tell
Of pristine 'Chapman's Homer,' and the rest.
He saw the dullest thing was for the best,
So waxed at money-bags respectable!"

And failed God's fiery charge! And stinks in Hell!

See, little breeze upon my forehead, see.
We all become what we were meant to be.
Just with a little courage! and there 's still
Within each poet's heart the enchanted hill
Of vision—or "beside Hydaspes cool"
The "faery city, 'neath the potent rule
Of Emperor Elfinan."

I must agree,
Though musical, that beldame "Sans Merci,"
The thing Hunt printed in the "Indicator,"
Seems trivial now, and "Cap and Bells" seems greater.
Good lack, far livelier! Until it cloyed
Even on the taste of—tch! tch!—"Lucy Lloyd!"

Well, goodly Reynolds, our Boccaccio tales
Fell by the wayside, and our wits were snails,
And only "Isabella" stood me staunch,
Blooms late—and withers on my poisoned branch!
Jeffrey can't help. The brush fire 's burning brightly.
And in goes Taylor and Hessey's tome, politely.

It must be late. How goes the line I wrote,
The one that to myself I love to quote,
The one to me that makes all others mute?
"Oh, golden-tongued Romance with serene lute!"
A brave epitome, my lad, John Keats!
There your soul speaks. There your heart truly beats,
Free of the strained archaic, Spenser's lure,
In homage unto Shakspere held secure.
Grant that—this cough!—I live to weave such rhyme—
Urr-r-r-r! Curse it! Curse it!—in a warmer clime.

Good night, inconstant home! Good night, my heart,—
And one—and one—who will not know her part!
Bright star, would she were steadfast as thou art. . . .
Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art. . . .
As steadfast—as thou—art. . . .

THE ANCIENTS

The ancients wiled him while he slept.
On all his ways a watch they kept.
At his bed's foot they stood in sight,
And bade him rise when day grew light
To other dreams than he should quest.
They would not ever let him rest.

Why, he had gazed upon the face
Of victory at Samothrace
And all the glory that was hers.
With bronzed Phœnician mariners
At Gades by the western gate
He had seen Melkarth's nuptial state
In sunset splendors manifest
O'er the far Islands of the Blest.

With Cyrus 'neath the colored walls
Of Ecbatana—in the halls
Of Nero's golden house, where flowers
Rained on the guests at banquet hours—
He had inhaled the strange perfume
Of ancient gorgeousness and gloom.
And he had seen the cedar beams
Of Solomon's palace in his dreams,
And stood with Croesus to behold
The Lydian river foaming gold.
With Hassan, as Arabians say,
He had been caliph for a day.

The Theban three had dazed his sight;
The high priest chanting to the light,
With antique litanies between;
The white bull through the incense seen;
And queens had passed with peacock fans,
Their naos borne by Africans:
Delicious beauty decked at ease
With corals from Erythrean seas
And whelky pearls plucked from the deep.

Battles had burst across his sleep.
He stood with Cocles at the bridge;
With Hannibal he clomb the ridge;
Felt a Scaevola's haughty ire
To thrust his arm into the fire
And laugh for scorn. Or he would call
Torqued Manlius who slew the Gaul
Unto his aid in times of stress.

More than Thalassius' happiness
He had wrested from the Sabine past.
He had stood with those about the mast
Whom Theseus succoured with his fleet
Daring the brazen man of Crete.
He had seen the Thirty's treacheries
Slay houseless Alcibiades,
And with the few who held the pass
Had likewise cheered Leonidas.

So vivid to him were their stories
That he would stammer o'er their glories,
In his small, dingy room, at me—
Some soiled page smoothed upon his knee.
He drudged all day, but, once upstairs
At night, the ancients claimed him theirs.
He grudged his hurried supper time
Till he was home, with prose or rhyme
To swing the gate or burst the gyve;
And then the man became alive.

And so he failed as man with men,
And so his stature grew again
By night, o'er history or fable,
With the lamp smoking on the table—
Boy to the last and steeped in glory.

His living was a different story?
Yet who can doubt his life's amends.
I have known far less worthy ends
Than his; to pulsate with a passion
And heroism out of fashion,
To steep himself in ancient color
Till good gray life grew all the duller;
I have known far paltrier ends, I say,
To gain the acclaim of this our day.

His hero worship filled the lack
Of all a man wants at his back;
Friends, wealth, position, fame, a wife.
He never wished these things of life,—
Nor just desired his hunger fed
As reliquary of the dead,—
But fanned a rare, bright flame of praise
Lest honor die from elder days.

A COLD TEMPERAMENT

When arguments grew too intense,
He was a master-hand to fence,
To say the excruciating thing,
To pluck the plum or draw the sting
Of any heavy conversation
With some immortal observation.

They say that he was cold, aloof,—
He never had been put to proof
By birth or death, by child or wife,—
That he but smiled and strolled through life,
With all its wolfish pain and want,
Too clever and too nonchalant.

Well, he was never in a passion
Of love or protest,—but his fashion
Was all too mild (as time enhances)
To draw such very furious glances,
When his smile gleamed, as words abated,
And he said something many hated.

When people took themselves too seriously,
When they emotionalized imperiously,
And when their bias seemed too arrant
Or condescension too apparent,
His eyes were sheathed, his fork was shifted,
Only his eyebrows slightly lifted.

The things he said were sometimes odd;
And whether he believed in God
I can't conjecture. And because
His heart was never meat for daws,
I do not know—to change the topic—
If he was "sweet" or "philanthropic."

He had a way that did not nettle
Some few, but put them on their mettle;
And an unfortunate zeal (decried!)
For "looking on the other side."
Some men bring thunder, others balm.
He only had peculiar calm.

He never, to my observation,
Gave of himself a "revelation."
He never did a thing of price
Or made one "noble sacrifice."
Yet I have tasted Heaven's wells
Hearing his monosyllables.

Never at all discomfited! . . .
And should I hear that he was dead,
Our old acquaintance lapsing so,—
How much I learned from him I know.
He never loved me, praised, or spurned.
He liked me. And from him I learned!

THE VIOLIN'S ENCHANTRESS

A ripple of light applause. We see her stand
Smiling. And now one slim expressive hand
Raises the lithe, long bow
That swiftly dips and swirls.
The clear allegro purls
Welling and welling from awakened strings,—
Welling and spreading to an overflow
Of first sweet jubilance. The lustrous pine,
Cherished against the softness of her cheek
Thrills 'twixt her breast and arm
And gaily, purely sings,—
Brilliantly seems to speak
In syllables divine,—
More animate as her fervor grows more warm.

And ere she holds us bound,
Just a delicious, graceful girl she seems;
Now, as the prelude pauses,
Just a slim, eager sprite in silver gauzes;
Then those not blind to see
And understand her dreams
May note the exquisite maternity
Of gentle throat and breast and downcast eyes,—
The fostering, brooding tenderness enwound
With this strange changeling child, her violin,—
And hear an infant's small and plaintive cries
Quaver and sob within
Those first bright waves of sound.

Faintly our hearts reply. Not yet the stress
Of deep emotion bids them throb and burn.
Mere melody's enchantments are to learn,—
Subtle gradations, wonder-fraught finesse,
Tone-colors, cadences,—not yet that change
To tone magnificence and deeper storms
Of sound, whence notes like vivid lightnings leap,
Transmuting thoughts fit for the organ's sweep
Of spacious fugal forms
To these taut strings, since Bach enlarged their range.
Not yet the depth and height; the passionate psalms
Dreamed nightly by the valiant brain of Brahms.

Yet what expression,—what a sorcery
Of rhythmic intonations,
Pyrotechnic pizzicatos, modulations,
Exhaustless fluency
Weaving and interweaving!
Oh, darkly yet, but darkly understood
Is this miraculous instrument's conceiving!
O'er the elastic and tenacious wood
Did not the Mantuan brood,—
Deft Piedmontese, Lombard lute-fashioners,
Cremona's Andreas, and Antonio,
Parisians tapering their master's bow,
Guiseppe Guarnieri, Stradivar,—
(Craftsmen immortal as their smooth names are!)
Through them this music climbs aërial stairs,
Through them thou soarest, heart, tonight—tonight.
Whither their vision with her vision fares
This girl's glad heart takes flight
Tonight, tonight!—
The girl of gauzes still
Mothering to her will
The wizard curves from which such glory springs.
Her right arm swirls. Her left hand plucks the strings,
Her delicate fingers move in light alarm.
Leaning and cherishing,
Fifth by pure fifth each string
Sings to her heart's young ecstasy, swept by her swirling arm.

Then, as the rhythm enlarges to the sweep
Of her white arm's full arc,
Deeper and deeper dark
Descends upon our souls. Such portents as in sleep
Baffle its calm dominion with weird dreams
Now murmur to us from some mysterious steep
Of Delphi or Dodona. Caverned far
In the vast mountainside, where neither sun nor star
May reach with hallowed ray or rosy light,
But all is dreadful night,
The incantations of Time's priestess sound
Where, from the smoking fissures of the ground
Beneath her tripod, mount in fuming vapor
Ghosts of all tears and laughter, joy and sin,—
The vanished hour, the hope that might have been.
Pythia and oracle their phantoms shape her,
Scattering our destinies like leaves. And round her
A midnight of deep notes grows still profounder.

Dumb sorrow bows us down,—when suddenly
Our darkness bursts to day!
Uprushing wings, buoyed on ecstasy,
Storm past our eyes—an archangelic flight
Mounting to height on height,
Thronging the infinite, whither they fade away.
Beneath us, as above,
Glow golden heavens of love
Throbbing the thoughts of God like muffled thunder,
Till sense is lost in vision, drowned in wonder.

Then faintly, as from leagues below our sky,
Pleads a far-penetrating human cry,
Rises a long-familiar earth-born strain
Our hearts may not deny;
And, in a rush of rapture and of pain,
The soul has found its fleshly home again.

Aye, Circe of sound, once more against a white
Vista of quivering light,
From a carved resonant case of lustrous pine
Of purest curves divine
Whose grace created Hogarth's famous line,—
From tremoring sound-post, ebon finger-board,
Your sinuous bow draws forth a deepening wail
Older than sun-strung lyre, Arabian monochord,
Rebec of wassail or lute of troubadour!
Hark to the heart-wrung wail,
Creation's oldest tale!
Drawn from that smooth-shaped and harmonic chamber
Of warm and deep-hued amber?
Nay! As in Eden the first man's heartstrings thrilled
Swept by the hand of God to life and love,
When the fresh-glowing heavens their dawn fulfilled,
From the rich primal passion of Man they pour
And soar above,—
Those pleading notes, that wane and flame and wane
Like sun-birds wounded, glorying in their pain!
Here trees that sang through age-long stress and strain
Reach immortality. The forest's sighing
Is prisoned forever in the wood it gave,
But Man matured the music it must crave,—
And this is Man's deep, inmost heart replying!

Man's inmost heart, so secret from the brain
In its strange agonies of joy and pain,
Only in music wholly may reveal
The deep faith that never dies, the deep wounds that never heal,
Since Jubal of the tribe of Cain,
One sacred evening in the land of Nod,
Flamed on the charm. The boy through sunset trod
Wielding his rude-hewn lyre of bone and horn
To awe his tribe unto their souls reborn
And strike them silent with the speech of God.

And with what glorious myth the centuries
Have fed this vestal fire unfalteringly!—
The Sun-god's power; the spouse of Niobe
(He whom the very stones of Thebes obeyed);
Arion, dolphin-borne across the sea;
David's wild harp, and Memnon's vocal stone;
Cecilia, when her saintly fingers laid
Inspired Heaven upon our earthly keys,
And sounded forth the angels' secrecies
Meant but for Heaven alone!

Oh, covenant of peace,—
Oh, light where shadows cease,—
Oh, art transcending all our human arts!
At last thy message seems
(Break not the faith of dreams!)
That here is surcease for our burdened hearts;
That here is concord 'twixt our darkened Earth
And some sure Heaven above,
Earth as our instrument, our Viol of Love,
And we like to those sympathetic wires
Laid 'neath its finger-board—as men have said
Man's own invention laid
Consonant strings, in music's first rebirth;
And when their joy requires
What divine fingers sweep Heaven's chords in trance,
That we, by consonance,
Answer beneath the sky that bounds our breath,—
Answer beneath this shell of life and death?
Oh, truth in dreams,—oh, prayer of stricken hearts,—
The Viol and its parts
Mingling in music, as this music saith!

Yet still the child, the girl, lost in the wide
High spaces of a hall, that seems to grow
Greater than we may know,
Sounds her sweet sôul forgetful, starry-eyed;
Against her well-loved music leans her cheek,
Soft curve to tender curve,—against the sleek
Resonant wood of a dead-living thing
Nestles her shoulder, whips the swirling bow.

Murmuring streams of joy, your waters flow
How clear from cool rock-springs of restfulness,
Winding through woodland green where wild birds call
To drop in many a silvern waterfall! . . .
Slower and yet more slow
The enchanting cadence chimes. . . . Then, the accelerate stress:
Passionate, passionate in their soaring pride,—
Wailful, and by their sorrow deified,—
Toward the magnificent summit of song they strain,
Those last wild notes of perfect purity.
That height they gain
Still mounting on and on . . . till a swift-rushing rain
Of as pure notes—or echoes—showers upon us all.
Deep breathing holds the hall;
And we have guessed not that the girl is gone;
For only harmony,—God who is harmony,—
Knows how those living echoes linger on!

PROFITABLE THINGS

All your other wares you pushed my way.
I refused them.
There were things drew praise on every shelf,
Obvious merits valued by yourself,
Showy things that caused the crowd to stay.
I could not have used them.

Yet I stayed. I might have made a slip.
Private virtues,
Cold, secreted hoards of them, my glance
Pierced to, by a most unhappy chance,
While you stared and bit your nether lip—
That grimace the hurt use.

Hoarding these you sinned in subtler ways
Of secret worship:
"Man but steals my worth at God's replevin.
These will gain me great applause in Heaven.
I am sure of the Aimighty's praise
For my connoisseurship!"

Nothing—nothing! Yet I searched. I must
Not leave embittered.
Then, 'neath humbug, glazed self-satisfaction,
Littered gauds of cant, I found retraction
Of my verdict. Down among the dust
Something surely glittered!

One lone hour of agony, overlaid
By this clutter
Of the thoughts and acts your world acclaims!
One experience; hosts of futile aims;
Once that dead heart beat—your soul was weighed
With the words none utter!

Men are right to hide such things, and deep—
Battling lonely.
Ah, but friend, my friend,—this gloating stealth,
This rich air o'er what you call your wealth!
Still so gulled by things so barren, cheap,
Profitable only?

A SONG OF DAWN AT DUSK

Not of sadness, now 'tis dusk
(All too often sung in sorrow)
And all certain outlines falter
From our world, a mist-wreathed altar,—
Not of sadness are my dreams
But of sunrise and tomorrow.
Death? I dream the death of sorrow.

As of old our life unfolds
Like a pageant never-ended
With new sunlit, moonlit hours,
Pristine dew and virgin flowers,
Fresher hues and fairer hopes
In a sunrise still more splendid
Till the earth and stars be ended.

Slowly, slowly, yet as sure
As the colors come in heaven,—
Come with morning, purer, rarer,
Wane with evening, richer, fairer,—
Dreams that high eternal mind
Through whose joy green earth was given
Unto Man, and thought of Heaven.

Safely, Love, I hold your hand
And your eyes wake mine to wonder
On the transience of all sorrow
And the surety of to-morrow,
Each tomorrow lifting sunward
From a night so soon swept under
As our world rolls on in wonder.

As of old the seasons wheel,
But if faith be vernal ever
Of new hopes and realizations
And new sunrise on the nations
Can we doubt the coast we lift
When life's mists and clouds dissever
In the last dawn come forever?

Not while heart now answers heart
With the words beyond all speaking,
Now that all familiar being
Grows so sacred to foreseeing,
Not while love is ours as now,
Not while soul toward soul is seeking
In the joy above all speaking!

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